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Gods Puppets



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GOD'S PUPPETS

BY

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

AUTHOR OF "A CERTAIN RICH MAN," "IN OUR TOWN,"
"THE COURT OF BOYVILLE," ETC.

"All service ranks the same with God—
"With God, whose puppets best and worst
"Are we. There is no last nor first."

New York

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GOD'S PUPPETS

A SOCIAL SPECTACLE

PART I

GOD'S PUPPETS

GOD'S PUPPETS

A SOCIAL RECTANGLE

PART I

IN that early and unlovely day in our national life when men coming home from the Civil War still regarded pain-giving as one of the high virtues, the *Times-Globe* never referred to Colonel Longford less gently than as "that human orangutan." His presence was esteemed by the same authority and in those days as a "portable plague spot." In a great black sheet-iron box locked with a log-chain and padlock — a box whereon the editor's rifle rested, a mute token of his willingness to assist might in making right — were filed away records of the evil men had done in the town, in the county, in the State and in the nation. That box was a kind of black Ark of the Covenant which the editor kept with his fellows, and in the box,

he always claimed, were records and documents whose lightest word would send Colonel Longford through the penitentiary to suicide.

Yet the Colonel was not upon particularly intimate terms of enmity with the editor; the Colonel's dark record was one of scores to which the editor of the *Times-Globe* in his high office of guardian of the public morals and keeper of the town's conscience pointed with pride. And it may be worth while to recall that in the open season for shooting editors — as for instance when the campaign for the location of the courthouse was on, during a campaign for voting railroad bonds or for choosing a member of the school board or the council — the Colonel was but one of a gallant company who availed themselves of the season's pleasant privilege and took pot shots, wing shots and trap shots at the editor. So the long list of those names that could not be printed in the paper grew longer, until in the decade following the Civil War the list included the flower of the chivalry of New Raynham. And as many of the flowers in that bouquet were merchants whose advertising patronage was needed by the sordid demands of a pay roll, it became necessary for the

editor to leave his citadel and find another watch-tower of public virtue in another town. But before he left — the week before he left — he printed this item:

“Born to Mrs. Prudence Cabot Longford, three hours before her death, a baby girl, who has been named Lalla Rookh. For the sake of the motherless child who is cast into worse than orphanage we regret that the sweet and patient sufferings of a devoted life are ended.”

When the black box was opened by the young schoolmaster who paid seven prices for the *Times-Globe*, the damning evidence in the dark archives was found to be chaff. All that was held against the Colonel was the fact that he deserted an Irish regiment to fight on the Union side in the Civil War; that he joined the Fenian raid on Canada, and that he took a contract to furnish hay to troops in Arizona before coming to New Raynham.

As a dashing young Irish colonel of a coloured regiment John Longford had caught and held the heart of a Yankee girl near Boston, had eloped with her to Arizona after the Fenian raid, and the rest we knew. He had no particular business or

calling, and was just coloneling round in a grand way in politics and in real estate and in contracts to supply stone or meat or hay or railroad rights-of-way, wherever he could find employment for his talents — a bull-necked, bull-voiced, bull-headed Irishman with a mid-Victorian education, who loved to quote Tom Moore and Charles Lever; drank corn whisky to flaunt his Democracy; was not over-nice in his stories or his accounts; and had the documents to prove that he was a true descendant of the rightful heir to the Irish throne. He had the only case of books in the town in those halcyon days of his early widowerhood, when he launched out with a coloured mammy for his house-keeper, and walked with a chip on his shoulder before all the town's widows and school-teachers, tempting them to touch him if they dared.

A year and a month and a week and a day after the funeral of the late Prudence he made a dashing social sortie into the shining needles of the enemy and gave a party — and escaped. He was the very devil in a church social, and aired his knowledge of cookery and his taste in literature before the available women as one who loved dangerous ice for its own smooth sake. When his little girl

was seven years old he had torn down his old barns and built him new ones, and in his house was a large room gaudy with Indian blankets and trophies and bestrewn with books. The books were of such a sadly improper character, many of them, that the town shook its head; but when he inaugurated a weekly afternoon tea and read Locksley Hall by the open fire in the twilight the town could not resist. Now Tennyson done into Irish after tea is a tempter that few women could withstand. Yet the Colonel knew too much about cooking, and after reading the song of Maud with such fire in his voice as fifty full fighting years could fan up he would sigh to the assembled company: "Ye never can tell of the ways of the heart; and if I could find a woman who had never parboiled a goose, nor scalded a turkey to pick him —" He never finished the sentence, but wiped a tear from his eye and smiled into the fire as he sighed:

*"And my heart would hear her and beat,
Though I'd lain for a century dead!"*

But even that could not tempt them to touch the chip on his shoulder, though it should have tempted a woman saint. So the Colonel's fifties merged

into his mellow early sixties and found him tall, burly, shaggy, merry-eyed and devilish, with more property than he knew exactly what to do with and more notes outstanding than he could conveniently pay.

And Lalla Rookh, of the house of Longford, was passing from twelve to twenty before his puzzled eyes. The little girl who loved to coast down the boys' hill "belly buster" and scorned the baby hill; the little girl who had learned to ride as she learned to walk; who had learned the stern virtue of lying from her coloured mammy and the refined art of it from her father; who took her mother's Puritan religion as a dissipation and often went on spiritual debauches at the revivals in the town, adventuring with God until her little soul was exalted beyond human endurance; who swarmed the girls of her hive at school like a queen, and led them into the library for forage when her father was away; the little girl who could always bat her father's jokes back to him, was passing in some mysterious way beyond her father's ken. A strange, prim young person was coming into her face. He shook his head and sent her to a convent, and she ran away and wrote him from

a boarding school. He laughed, made a note at the bank for her year's tuition and told the story in the town as a sign of her prowess.

It was in those days when the country was bumping along over rough roads at high pressure, when men grew rich over-night and poor before sunset, that the Colonel, having taken what he wanted in one way or another, had retired from business in the fulness of years, with some kind of a vast Irish dream of settling up his affairs and becoming a patriarch for the town. He used to haunt the newspaper office where his name twenty years before had been a curse, and expound the meaning of his dream. We never knew what it was; nor did the Colonel know exactly; but we were for the Colonel's scheme and wrote more or less about it. Then there came a time when his interest in the plan slackened and we found out, by the innumerable lines of gossip that converge in every newspaper office, that the Colonel was worried about his daughter. She had been too enthusiastic for three separate boarding schools, so she came home in her late teens very much of a young woman, with a deeply cleft chin, the Colonel's own devilish chin, which he had hidden all the years with whisk-

ers; and with something as to eyes — reddish brown, a match for the Colonel's wavy hair — something as to eyes deep and restless and so indecently candid as to be almost openly intriguing with every pair of eyes they met, and with a figure —

"My heavens, Madie!" said the little flat-chested, milk-eyed society editor at her telephone to the inky-nosed printer-girl waiting for copy, as Lalla Longford whirled out. "Ain't that a goddess in corsets for you!"

The exit of Lalla Rookh was always as dramatic as her entrance. Her coming and going seemed like the flashing on and off of a joyous flame, and when she left the newspaper office the society editor brushed back a stray lock of lusterless hair and turned to her typewriter, saying:

"Wait a minute, Madie; I've got to rewrite this Longford girl's item."

"Mercy, did you see those sleeves, Elsie? Are they wearing 'em that big now?"

But the society editor went on writing and talking it out in an undertone as she wrote: " ' He — is — a — graduate — of Evanston University — and — the — Medical School ' —

" Say, Madie, this is her fellow; she left boarding school near Chicago to be with him —

" ' Of — Pennsylvania ' —

" And she went to boarding school near Philadelphia to be with him; they say it's an awful case." Resuming her monotone:

" ' And — he — will — occupy offices in — the Borland Building. His mother — Mrs. Matilda — Kurtlin — will live — with him at 1127 College Heights Avenue. They — will — arrive ' —

" The old lady's got money, they say; anyway she's staying by the boy. They say he is only twenty-four —

" ' Next — Tuesday — and during — their — first — few days — in New Raynham — they — will — be the — guests of — Colonel Longford — at — Longheath. ' "

The typist slipped the sheet out of the machine and jabbed it at the inky-nosed person, saying: " Mark that ' Society. ' "

As the stubby printer-girl waddled out the society editor called shrilly: " Charley! Oh, Charley! "

A man at a desk in the front office looked up. " Make a note on your calendar that a young fel-

low — Lalla Longford's prize package named Dr. Paul Kurtlin — is to be here Tuesday to open an office in the Borland Building, and go get his professional card for the paper and hit him for some letterheads and envelopes."

"Got you," answered the man finally as he pushed back his tablet; then he asked: "When's it going to be?"

"Oh, I don't know," called back the girl at the telephone. "Maybe never, now that she's good and got him. She was that way as a little girl."

"I'll give her four months; then she'll nab him," said the man in the front office. No reply came from the society editor's room. She was rattling away at her machine. As she came out ten minutes later the man in the business office hailed her: "Elsie, I bet you an oyster stew Lalla Rookh has him nailed down and married before snow flies."

"You made a bet!" replied the girl as she slammed the door on her way into the composing room. When she returned she said: "Charley, I don't want to take your money; but I watched her dancing with that young Prof — the new one — Gregory Nixon, a big, handsome brute who teaches

physics out at the college — and I'm here to tell you the Doc's got competition! My, but they made a couple! And after he danced five dances with her I quit counting and went to work."

As the summer deepened the battle for the possession of Lalla Longford opened for the diversion of the whole town. A town's mind is a child's mind. It cannot see the foreshadowing of a tragedy for what it is. The town's mind saw only the comedy of it. The town smiled and sometimes even laughed. But those were serious days for three young people grappling with the most vital problem in youth. The slight, blue-eyed doctor, with his sympathetic face, with his high forehead full of dreams and his heart shining through his troubled countenance, seemed only a boy, distraught and worried, as he went about his little practice that summer. For Dr. Paul Kurtlin realised, even before he had seen Nixon, that danger was in the air. The Doctor had the nine points of the law that come with possession. She still wore his ring. But the tall, heavy, quiet, effective, easy-going, slow-speaking, gentle-handed, patient college man, older than the doctor, plodded along, accepting the handicap of the ring good-

naturedly but not seriously. And because the Professor was persistent in his love-making the Doctor could feel the quake of the ground under him. As for the girl —

“ Ah, Archimedes! ” smiled the Colonel one summer evening as he tilted his chair back in front of the printing office and talked to the schoolmaster, grown into his forties, who for a score of years had been handling the lever that moved the world of New Raynham. “ Archimedes, my boy, 'tis a queer world ye hooked your lever to, a damned queer world, and the fun of it is we have to lie so much to keep it going. There's poor little Lally Rookh, eatin' the heart out of her; fer that she loves 'em both, the polygamous little haythen! She loves 'em both and wants 'em both, and could love another and more if so be the case. But because society holds her to one she's tearin' her heart out decidin' a most unnatural question! ”

The Colonel thumbed his vest-holes and looked at the twinkling September stars, and smiled and nodded whimsically as though to an old friend. “ And don't ye know it's the truth, Prudey, by this time, that I was a born polygamist? But for the way you had of devilin' kidneys and pannin' a rab-

bit and roastin' a goose I'd 'a' been philanderin' far and wide, Prudey, and well ye know it now, my poor gel — well ye know it now!" The Colonel sighed and snapped his suspenders with his thumbs, and continued: "And then Lally Rookh, Archimedes, poor Lally Rookh, she's her father's daughter by marriage, and blood kin to the chained Turk who sits in the back of my head, gnawing his chains and thanking God for the safety and the comfort they bring him."

The reply of Archimedes is unimportant except that it prompted these words from the Colonel: "It's the young Doctor I'm really sorry for, if ye must know the truth. Haven't I tramped the cobblestones of Dublin, across the bridge and down the quay, and up the quay and over the bridge, all of a winter's night, with the vultures of shame and hate and — saints forgive me! — murder rippin' my heart to shreds on the weddin' night of Kate McGarrity, dead these thirty years. Ah, my little man, my game little doctor man, ye'll be salvin' a blister on your poor soul the long score of years till you're passin' forty! And I'm wonderin' now" — and the Colonel gazed wistfully at the stars as he spoke — "if Prudey and Kate will be

meetin' betimes and havin' a bit of a tear and a smile in their tea in the Milky Way yonder as they talk me over ! ”

The autumn sank into winter, and still the town smiled at the battle for Lalla Longford. We Americans make a pretence of civilisation that keeps us from claws and fists and knives and guns in the struggles for our mates. But the fierceness of the fight is prolonged only because it has no climax, no expression in terms of blood and muscle. How the town could laugh at the tense, strained face of the Doctor, or the lowering animal wrath that loomed big in his slow-moving, dogged rival, is only explicable on the theory that it is always funny to see a man act the beast, or a beast try to act the man. But our sense of humour blinds our eyes to the tragedy that inheres in every yielding of the man to the beast, or aspiration of the beast toward man.

The quarrel that Nixon knew he would force between the Doctor and the girl came in January. The Doctor sent for his ring and got it; but he did not know that she sent it covered with kisses of remorse. Then the Colonel took her away to the city for a week of grand opera, and Wagner har-

rowed her heart. So she wrote passionate letters to both her lovers, and the big man came to the city and got her.

The boy who brought the telegraphic press report one Saturday afternoon came stumbling along, reading the sheet. He handed it to the society editor, who met him in the corridor, and she cried to the man in the business office: "I win! I win! They've eloped to New York!"

The office force came crowding round to read the despatch, and there it was, in plain typewritten characters — the story of Lalla Rookh and the Professor, and the Colonel chasing them furiously to the station in a cab and then throwing kisses after them as they stood on the rear of the departing train.

When they had all gone out of her room the society editor called: "Charley, come here!" And when Charley came she shut the door and whispered: "And not five minutes ago, as I was in the post-office for the afternoon mail, I met Doctor Kurtlin — his box is right above ours — and Charley, if that girl hadn't written him a letter — written Doctor a letter that he got just now. My land, Charley — what — do — you — think

— of that! Why, it must have been just before she left with Nixon. I saw it drop from his box, address up; it's her big box-car handwriting, and it wasn't a little old ta-ta or by-by; it was a big fat letter! "

Then in a pause her newspaper sense came to her, and she hurried to a door and called: "Herman, Doctor Kurtlin got a letter a minute ago from Lalla Rookh. You send one of the boys over to his office and maybe he'll talk — send Jim; he can fight if he has to!" The girl came back to her desk by the telephone and sat looking at the advertising solicitor. "Charley," she said, "listen to me: If that girl lives to be thirty, she's going to make a big first-page, black-head, three-decked story for this paper. She is full of the kind of dynamite that makes news!"

"Well, don't you go telling Archimedes your dreams, Elsie," answered the solicitor; "he's that soft on the Colonel he'll order the story killed five years in advance and cut down to-day's story to a society item on the third page!" And with that they fell to their work.

PART II

But alas for the futility of prophecy! The only copy Mrs. Lalla Rookh Nixon made during the first five years of her married life was birth notices! Three notices appeared in fairly regular succession, and the last notice chronicled twins. Then news of that character conspicuously quit coming from Longheath, where the happy couple had settled down with the Colonel. The phrase "settled down" perhaps may apply to Gregory Nixon, who settled down to a steady brilliancy of work in his profession; the phrase may even have applied to the Colonel, who was enjoying to the full the long afternoon of his vigorous life, as one on a quiet perennial spree who lives in fear of the return of somber sobriety; but "settled down" was no phrase to use on Lalla Rookh. The current of life was strong in her. But after the birth of the twins she seemed to tire of the game of domesticity. Almost with a click or bang or whack she slammed the door on the picture she had been making of herself as she appeared in public with her children, rather over-dressed and bedizened, grouped beautifully round her. Then she opened

another door as impetuously as she had shut the last one, and Elsie Barnes at the *Globe* office began getting two kinds of items from Longheath. One set of items was always written in Mrs. Nixon's box-car chirography, setting forth the achievements of the Professor in the line of pure physics. Her chronicles told us what we knew in the office, that his papers delivered before learned societies were being translated into many foreign languages and that he was becoming an international figure in his profession. The items told us also of important offers he received from great Eastern universities to take chairs or departments in his line of work, which he always refused. We knew why. It was because his salary at the college was large enough to live on, and because he had practically ceased to teach and was devoting his time to research work. Also the Colonel loved the babies, but he would not leave New Raynham, and Lalla Rookh would not leave him, and the Professor would not leave Lalla Rookh, so pure science thrived in our little college and all the world made a path to the Professor's door. The second type of news that we had from the Nixons concerned the activities of Mrs. Nixon. She had as-

sumed a distinctive kind of social leadership in the town. Let the divine Elsie with her troubled hair and her baked-potato complexion describe it:

"Now, Madie, wait till I give you this chunk of copy the Nixon woman has sent down here. She can't spell for sour apples, but she does manage to turn in the news. It's the list for to-day of the contributors to the flood sufferers in Ohio. Honest, Madie, I'd think the merchants would hate to see that woman come bursting into the stores — she never comes without a subscription paper. And she's always wringing money out of 'em for something — floods and earthquakes and doors of hope and provident associations and home guards and the old brass band and the North End Mission and the rescue work and the anti-saloon league — heavens to Betsy! And say, Madie, did you know she snatched that little tough hussy of a Snay girl as a brand from the burning and has her at Longheath a-makin' baskets? — and Mrs. Nixon goes round selling 'em — literally choking baskets down people's throats. That's the third little ash-cat she's picked up this year." Elsie rattled away as she corrected the copy, and when the printer girl had gone she called:

"Charley! Oh, Charley! Come here. I got something to tell you."

When Charley appeared with his paste brush in hand: "What do you think — the Nixons had Dr. Paul Kurtlin out to dinner last night to meet that Frenchman! She handed the Doctor's name in with the dinner guests." Elsie blinked malevolently, and Charley prodded her: "Go on, you rattlesnake, say it!"

"Well, *I* think," returned the girl, busying herself with the copy on her desk — "I think, Mr. Charley, that she's going to break up that little budding affair between the Doctor and the Ellis girl — that's what I think, if you must know!"

"Ah, Elsie, you're such a —" He did not finish his sentence, for the door opened suddenly and the man, looking round, gazed into the pink-and-white features of Mrs. Lalla Rookh Nixon. He faded into the next room without a word.

"Well, Elsie, if it isn't too late here's another hundred dollars I've got for the flood sufferers. I hope you can get it in the paper this evening."

She spoke in the gentlest tones, and put her strong hand in a caressing habit she had on the girl's shoulder. The girl at the desk looked up

at the tall, gorgeous creature scrupulously, even painfully, tailored from toe to chin, with the frank yet intriguing eyes, and the splendid head of flaming copper-coloured hair; and the rattlesnake blink went out of Elsie's eyes. She touched the fondling hand and said: "Why, of course I can get it in," and taking the paper and dabbing it here and there with a pencil to make it conform to some office style, she hurried out to the composing room. When Elsie came back she found her visitor still standing by the desk. Mrs. Nixon touched her arm again with caressing fingers and said:

"Now, my dear, I want you to do two things for me. First, I want you to assemble your Plymouth Daughters next month and give a fair and sell a lot of the dearest baskets that Maudie Snay is making; and — now don't you flinch — I wish to arrange for Maudie herself to come down and take a booth. It will give her self-respect, and you know psychologists tell us self-respect is the foundation of will power, and that's the thing she most needs at present. Now you girls certainly can contribute that mite of sacrifice to the cause of charity. And I'll stand near Maudie and see that she doesn't interfere with your boys."

She paused and smiled, then added: "Oh, Elsie, Elsie, if you only knew how sweet the life of service really is." She had her arm round the girl's bony waist and hugged her a little. "Now, Doctor Paul"—she hesitated half coyly after the name and then repeated: "Doctor Kurtlin promised me last night he'd solicit all the doctors in the Argyle Building for my flood sufferers, and he must have two or three hundred dollars." Again she stopped as for a longer jump than she had made and flushed prettily as she spoke:

"I don't want to go to his office." The tone of her voice grew a little shrill and tense as she said: "Elsie, dearest, won't you run up there and get that list and tell him I'm down here waiting for you?" The reporter blinked at Mrs. Nixon a moment as she wondered what pose of modesty was back of the woman's hesitancy about going to the Doctor's office. But Elsie put on her hat and was gone in a moment. Dr. Paul Kurtlin returned with her, and she saw the over-candid eyes of the woman meet the man's eager gaze, and then droop a little—a calculated little—and their hands met for an instant, perhaps two in-

stants, before they fell to the work of inspecting the Doctor's paper.

All the time Elsie, bending over her machine, hammering away at her copy, was watching from the sharp corners of her dull gray eyes the feminine craft of Mrs. Nixon — the glancing touch of a finger to a wrist; the brush of her body against the man's arm; the mingling of her breath with the man's as they bent over the paper; the devilish poison in the reddish-brown eyes as they flicked the Doctor's flushed face, and over all this an obvious veil of kittenish innocence that made the reporter's gorge rise. She felt she had to keep the machine going, but she could write only, "Now is the time for all good men and true to come to the aid of the party," over and over, and she brushed back her straggling hair betimes and set her teeth by time lock. And Lalla Rookh smiled at the reporter through it all as blandly as though she did not know that Elsie knew what was occurring. And what made Elsie's teeth ache as she ground them was the knowledge that as soon as the man was gone the beautiful creature who had herself so well in hand would begin making love to Elsie

to make her doubt the evidence of her own eyes and ears.

As he was leaving the room Mrs. Nixon said: "Here's a receipt I've made out as chairman of the committee, Paul. You just fill in the total." She handed him a folded paper, and as he went Mrs. Nixon was saying: "Now, Elsie, that poor Snay child never has had a show—a drunken father and a mother washing out by the day and the children growing up in the street. Oh, Elsie, Elsie, I never see one of her kind nor any of the poor girls down in Jintown that I don't say to myself: 'There you go, Lalla Longford, if the good God hadn't shielded you.' Don't be narrow, Elsie, because you haven't had to fight with that particular devil; your own devils are probably just as bad of their kind." Her hand, soft and yet strong, but white and well kept, touched with a caressing pat the bony, brown-red hand of the reporter. The girl felt an extra squeeze, and the woman was gone. Elsie sat at her desk and tore off the scribbled sheet of rough copy paper on top of her pad. Under it she noticed a sheet had been torn out, and on the soft white paper before her she traced in shadowy out-

line where the hard pencil had written the words on the extracted sheet: "My dear, dear Paul," and then a few half-legible but meaningless lines, closing with "——ing Lalla." The girl tore out the embossed sheet, wadded it up and threw it into the basket. Then she reached for it, tore it up and chewed it up, and carried it with her when she went to the stove in the back room.

It was nearly a year afterward, when the youngest little Nixons were three years old, that the town began to realise that Dr. Paul Kurtlin spent more time than was necessary with the Nixons; not with Mrs. Nixon particularly but with all the Nixons, including the Colonel. Always the Doctor was around for Sunday dinner; always he made a place at table when notables were to be entertained. When the Nixons drove he rode behind the family horse, sometimes with the Professor, sometimes with Mrs. Nixon, sometimes with the Colonel, but never with the children. For they were not taken on these family drives.

The children were at that time wandering about the universe like four disengaged moons, in charge of a white-capped nurse. They were more or less out of school, more or less down with something

catching, when Lalla Rookh was attending grand opera and living what she called "my own life in my own way"; and what with short socks and hygienic underwear and bare red knees in the winter, when other children of New Raynham wore long flannels and overshoes, and what with an ever-varying scientific diet to reduce their rising tendency to fratricide, they were beginning to be a sensitive point between Mrs. Nixon and her friends.

It was at a committee meeting of the Children's Home Society, of which organisation Mrs. Nixon was for the moment president and moving spirit, that she burst out in answer to a covert scratch of one of the women on the committee: "Now, Jane, you run your children and I'll run mine. Go ahead and slave for them if you want to. I won't. I get the best nurse that money will buy, and she knows twice as much about the children as I do. She's a graduate nurse and better than half the doctors, and she's teaching them French and German as they grow up and she loves all four of them fondly."

The great frank eyes swept the circle and the cheeks reddened and dimpled as she smiled:

"Now, girls, I'm going to shock you to death. Listen: You are all pretending, faking, just politely lying, because you think it's proper to, when you talk about mother love. There is no such thing. I love my children as much as any of you, but I don't love them at all because they're my children. I could take any other four that were just as good as mine and love them just as much."

When the committee had quit gasping Lalla Rookh went on: "Now, girls, don't you go and say I don't love my children, for I do; but it's because they are good little things, and nice, and clean, and not sticky and dirty and messy, and because the nurse keeps them well-bred and teaches them good manners."

When that story got out and over the town legend declared that Lalla Longford would be perfectly willing to eat her children raw if she were hungry, and the comments on the strange relations of the Nixons to Doctor Kurtlin grew more and more acrid in their nature. The Professor had a laboratory at one end of the long two-storied brick edifice that was Longheath, and he often spent his evenings in the laboratory or with the children. Sometimes Doctor Kurtlin sat with Mrs. Nixon;

sometimes the Colonel sat with her; and sometimes the Colonel and his daughter and the Doctor went to the theater together, or appeared at the few social gatherings that the Nixons patronised. For Lalla Rookh was not bitten by the social bug.

Most of the joy of social climbing is in climbing, not in arriving; and in New Raynham, Lalla Rookh was born in the social sanctuary. So she was intensely democratic, loathed snobbery, and went in, not for bridge and teas but for committee work in the City Federation of Women's Clubs, for the afternoons of the music club and for dinners — chiefly her own dinners, for that matter — where the talk often ranged upon subjects which the Colonel, with his Victorian ideals, regarded as a shade too frank even for his liberal standards. So when gossip began to buzz about Mrs. Nixon society could not reach her. She did not ask to be chairman of any committee; all she asked was to do the committee's work, and any committee will surrender that right to any one, even though the lady to whom the surrender is made does spend rather more time than is required in the company of a former lover. She did not seek for a place on the programme of the music club; she asked

only to make the programmes, to see that the invited performers came, and to pay the bills from her own pocket.

As for her dinners — well, it was at her dinners that all the vital energy that moved the soul of Lalla Rookh came out to walk the earth. At her dinners she dared — dared in her cooking to do those glorious things which other women read of and dreamed of and fancied might be royal; dared in her talk to say all that lay behind those candid, fearless eyes; dared in her guests to twist social lines and rub the insolent democracy of the aristocrat under the noses of the socially squeamish. But most of all she dared in her clothes. No one would imagine that the tautly tailored person, sailing like a trim schooner down Constitution Street by day, could strip for action like a battleship by night and show where every ounce was of the hundred and sixty pounds tonnage she carried — and show it a great glistening jewel of life, as much vitalised on her arms and broad, dimpled back as in her face, which changed every moment as the winds of feeling played through the wide-open windows of her heart. Indeed, as for her dinners, there Lalla

Rookh queened, even as the Colonel before her had colonelled his way to such success as his soul craved. So, in spite of the salient irregularity of the thin-visaged, steel-fingered, probe-eyed Doctor's position in the Nixon household, there were never too many plates for the guests at Mrs. Nixon's dinners, and Lalla Rookh snapped her fingers at the town, and the town replied as one woman: "Well, how does the Professor stand it?"

To which query the Professor might well have put another: "Stand what?" And that would have been a poser; for, whatever the relations were between Mrs. Nixon and the Doctor, they were not evidenced by a single episode or incident which the town could question. But the town might reply: "A man does not spend all his spare time with a woman, particularly a woman to whom he has been engaged, and by whom he was madly and impulsively jilted, unless —" "Well, unless what?" might the devil's advocate make answer, and all the town could have done would have been to wag its head and grumble: "Well, anyway —" and let it go at that.

And yet at the bookstore there was evidence

that the Doctor was ordering all the books he could find that told of the loves of Dante and Beatrice, of Petrarch and Laura, of Pelléas and Mélisande and of all the other affairs of unrequited affection of which he had ever heard. Whatever Lalla Rookh's theory of the situation was, it was certain that the Doctor was taking it with dreadful seriousness. And his seriousness affected him with a kind of an obsession of gentleness and consideration for everyone. He visited upon the poor a very passion of tenderness, and entered into their lives with a fraternity of spirit that made them his champions. Perhaps his work among the poor was in the hope of feeling her approval; perhaps it was because love begets love. No one knew and few asked. For in such cases the public mind finds it easier to scoff than to speculate about eccentricities that are by-products of a three-cornered love affair.

As for the big, preoccupied man with the deep, quiet voice who was Lalla Rookh's husband, the town had a divided opinion. Two things were said of him — that he was too busy to care what was going on; and that he was biding his time. And neither saying was true.

For the truth is that Lalla Rookh fooled her husband, after the old, old fashion of the woman whose husband is away on a long journey; for the Professor always was away on a long journey into the innermost core of matter. Yet though she fooled him — such is the sad inconsistency of her type of mind — she loved him. He was the shadow of a great rock in a weary land for her, the land of vain pretences and subtle intriguing, the land of exciting adventures all in the humdrum of the day's routine work, the land of complicated motives and tangled desires, a waste land wherein she descended slopes and ran breathless back up steep to safety — ran panting lest she should fall into the pit, and insanely hoping she might fall; a land of stolen waters that corroded her soul and of bitter desert fruit that choked her life; a weary land of mirages, where she walked she knew not why, save that she had a wandering foot. And Gregory Nixon was the shadow of a great rock where she rested and was happy.

Probably it was under the shadow of that rock that Mrs. Nixon went forth as ministering angel in her various public activities. For certainly that part of her life was effective. Even though occa-

sionally as she flitted from cause to cause, walking among the poor, going in and out of the stores and offices of the town begging for money for a wide variety of charities, she met the Doctor, and enjoyed miserably with him one of those brief public trysts which left her disheveled in mind and heart — even then she enjoyed keenly the satisfaction of helping the needy at no particular cost to herself, save that of time and money, both of which she had in abundance.

The town wagged a sad head and gave her up. Whether she realised how publicly posted her story was one cannot say. Perhaps even if she had known how well her neighbours were reading it she would have gone into the anti-saloon fight merely to crucify herself and prove to herself that she was not letting her daily excursions among the mirages in the weary land make a coward of her. Or probably she went as a fool blinded by her folly. But she did go into the fight for a dry town, and she went with all the enthusiasm of an ardent nature.

Now, ladies and gentlemen in the saloon business and its allied trades, fighting for their lives, have not those nice, chivalric scruples that Sir

Launcelot practised in seeking the Holy Grail. They use whatever weapon the devil puts in their hands, and they endured Lalla Rookh up to a point; but when she began to be effective they let fly. Whereupon the air grew first purple and then red with stories, highly apocryphal and gorgeously false, yet all based on the fundamental and undisputed fact that Mrs. Nixon and Doctor Kurtlin were engaged in some kind of love affair that had no legal right to exist.

It was only after Archimedes, who handles the lever that moves the world of the town, had refused to print the Personal Liberty League circular, and indeed only after the League had taken it to a job-printing office and had it made into a handbill, that it seemed wise for Elsie of the flat chest and rope hair and saddle complexion to act. It was dusk and the office was deserted when Mrs. Nixon came glowing into the dingy room where the typewriter and the telephone ran the social news of New Raynham through Elsie as a sort of human transformer, from the high voltage of truth to the low voltage of such sparkling facts as she dared put on her humble society page. In the room Mrs. Nixon found Elsie, and the girl blinked

for a moment at Mrs. Nixon before reaching in her desk and bringing out the printed circular.

"Sit down, Mrs. Nixon, and read this," she said.

Lalla Rookh, radiating health and joy and affection, a kind of an incarnation of sweetness and light — plus a perfect and pleasurable digestion — sat beside the thin woman of her own age, whose life seemed so meagre, and held the folded sheet in her lap for a moment without looking at it.

"So you wanted to see me, dear? Well —" The goddess patted the long, thin, brown hand on the typewriter keys.

The girl nodded at the circular in the lap beside her, but Mrs. Nixon went on: "Oh, Elsie, we are going to win this fight. I've been at headquarters all day and we know exactly how we stand. Two women and one man are working in every block, all under precinct captains and ward leaders, and the fight is won — it's won, Elsie!" She put the circular on the table, still folded, and squeezed the girl in sheer joy of life, and then picked up the paper and asked: "What is this, anyway?"

"Read it," replied Elsie soberly, adding: "They are going to spring it to-night if —"

The girl saw the splendid, effective, exuberant woman pass suddenly down creation's line. She saw the colour come and go from shame to fear and fear to shame, and saw the trembling jaw set and the set jaw tremble, and the hands flutter in fear and grip the paper in rage. The frightened creature turned to the reporter, and licking her trembling ashen lips said:

"If — what?"

"If you don't get out of the fight to-night," answered the reporter. "We just got it at half past four. Archimedes thought your father was too old to handle it. I said your husband should not see —"

"Oh, thank you — thank —"

The girl took the sheet from the floor where it had dropped as she went on: "And I thought of Doctor Paul; but I knew he'd probably go to shooting — or some fool thing!"

The woman nodded and said "Yes," more in a gasp than an assent.

"So I sent for you." The girl put a steady hand on the fluttering fingers. "Now, then, Lalla

Rookh Longford, brace up. We're both thirty-five years old. You know me; you knew me in school, and you knew me when I delivered the washing to your house in my little wagon, and when I set type here in the back room. I'm not pretty-for-nice, Lalla, but I'm here to help!"

As she spoke she saw the beautiful mouth twitching and heard the sobs struggling to rise, and in another instant Lalla Rookh was convulsed in weeping. Her whole frame shook and she moaned.

"What have I done! What have I done! Before God, I've done no evil — no evil — no evil! Oh, what have I done!" she cried as she clenched her soft white hands. The reporter rose and stood looking at the woman as she breasted wave after wave of self-pity and let her emotions go unrestrained. The curtains were drawn, and the lamp under its paper shade fell only on the typewriter beneath it. In the half darkness the two women were as remote from the world as they would have been upon a desert island. Finally the shuddering form grew still and the wet eyes lifted guiltily to the girl's pale-gray eyes, and with intriguing candour in the brown eyes the woman

began imploring Elsie for pity even before the gentle voice spoke.

"You don't understand, Elsie, you don't understand!" cried the seductive voice. "God never let you be tempted; you never have fought my fight." She rose, came to the girl, and clasping her hands whispered: "But as God is my witness He knows I did no evil, and that"—she looked at the sheet on the table and shivered—"that is a lie—a lie! Oh, it's not true—only part of it. We did go there, but it was to rescue that Snay girl when she went back once. And we got her. Father was in the carriage outside when we went there and brought her home again."

"That's all right, we won't discuss that part of it," interrupted the reporter. "What shall we do about it? How can I help? I want to help and—Well, it's my assignment from the office to help. What's your first move?"

"First," answered the woman, who was coming back from her long drop down the line of creation and sat gripping the desk, "call up Doctor Paul. I must be the first to tell him this—to keep him from—"

"Yes." In a second Elsie was sending in the

call. When they found that the Doctor was out on a professional visit the two women pondered a moment. "I'll wait here with you. Telephone Gregory to go on with dinner. Tell him I'm busy; he'll understand."

A minute later, after the girl had hung up the receiver, the woman asked: "Elsie, were you ever in love?" She took the girl's two hands and held them tightly as she spoke. The reporter nodded, and Mrs. Nixon went on: "Then tell me, what is the matter with me? I love my husband; I love my children. And yet —"

Then the slow, hard voice of the girl beside her began, as one reading dim print: "And yet you've lived soft and you are soft clear through. Listen: Charley and I have been going together ten years; we are kind of engaged and no one on earth knows it. He's got his crippled mother and his consumptive sister. And me? — I've got pa. Don't you think — oh, Lalla Rookh, don't you think it's hard sometimes — hard when I hear my children calling out in the night — hear the fire on my hearth crackle — don't you think it's hard? Yet if Charley went back on them I'd not — not — I'd not care for him, and he never yet has asked

me to leave pa! I'll just tell you something — it's five years — it'll be 'six in December — since he kissed me."

The woman beside her was sobbing. The girl broke her hands away and squared the woman round rather rudely.

"Wait a minute," she called. "I'll try to get the Doctor on the phone again. Now you brace up! You can't afford to have any high jinks; you've got to act." After the telephone had revealed the fact that the Doctor was on the way to his office Elsie went on: "Your trouble, Lalla Longford, is that you haven't got it in your noodle that love is sacrifice. What have you ever given up for your man or your kids? Ask yourself — not a blessed thing. You've had this grand flirtation with the Doctor, and made a fool of him if there ever was one. And you've paraded round indulging in your philanthropic desires like a dope fiend, and what have you given up? Now just what?"

The larger woman shook her head and clearly was thinking of something else. She was working out in her mind, through the labyrinth of the political situation as she knew it, some plan to stop

the publication of the circular, either with her lover's help or with her father's. Not once did she bring her husband back from his journey among the atoms and ions and electrons far into the heart of matter to help her. When she thought of him she flushed with shame.

When the phone bell rang she started, and when the reporter had handed the receiver to her she said in a low, excited voice: "Yes, Paul, it's Lalla. Will you come out to the house as quickly as possible? I must see you. Good-bye." She rose full of determination, with all her faculties in hand, and with her jaw firm and her eyes all but flaming with excitement. Then she turned to the reporter and cried: "You stay right here, and I'll phone you when I need you. I'm bound to need you by eight or nine o'clock. I'm going to turn this circular — where is it? Oh, yes, all right. I'm going to let father and Paul read this, and we three will work out some plan or something. But we may need you — you can act for us!" She turned to go, then came back and kissed the girl and cried: "Oh, Elsie, Elsie, don't think I don't appreciate you; you're the very salt of the earth!" Then she hurried away.

It was after eight o'clock when she met the Doctor at the front door of Longheath. She did not give him her hand. She did not meet his eyes. She would not take his arm as was her wont when they were alone in the house. She put aside almost angrily his question as to her mood, and as the man and woman side by side went through the hall it was in a silence as though they were approaching some dread doom. They saw through the living-room window the light in the Professor's laboratory, and the woman caught the man's sleeve and whispered:

"There he is. We won't disturb him. Father is with him." She went on: "Come back here to the big table and read this."

She handed the circular to the Doctor, and stood over him while he read, with her hand upon his shoulder. She could feel his body under her fingers give under the impact of the blow. When he looked up he was cursing in a low, hoarse whisper.

"Quit it! Brace up! Think, man — think; there is some way to stop this. Father's smart. Now then —" She left him with a quick stride and called down a corridor. Through the win-

dow they could see the Colonel moving about the laboratory and could see the Professor bending over his table. When the Colonel came in answer to her call the gaunt, shaggy old man, with just the faintest shuffle in his military tread and the shadow of a slouch in his bearing, smiled at the pair in the living-room and joked his old joke: "Well, how're Pelléas and Mélisande this evening?"

"Father — Father!" she repeated tragically; "don't — don't! Sit down — here by the lamp." She handed him the circular without a word and pointed to it, saying: "You must help! Oh, Father, you must, you must help!"

As the old man fumbled for his glasses he said: "Well, I'm glad to help. I was helping Gregory in there with that electrical experiment. The transformer doesn't work some way, but he says he'll get it down." The Colonel finally got on his glasses. The two stood watching him. He had not fixed his eyes on the sheet half a minute before he began: "What in hell is —" Then a few seconds later: "Well, Go —"

But a horrible blue-green glare in the window and a crashing sound scattered the group, and they

went running to the laboratory. It could not have been ten seconds from the time they saw the glare that the Colonel had shut off the current, and in the darkness they stumbled over the body of the Professor. The smell of scorching clothing was in the air and the little tongues of flame were lapping about the legs of a stool. While her father and the Doctor were stamping out the flames and chattering orders at each other, Mrs. Nixon accepted the challenge of death. She bent over the limp figure against which she had stumbled in the dark. She lifted it without a gasp, carried it into the living-room and put it on a couch. Under her command the Colonel was drawing water from a faucet in the laboratory and the Doctor was at his medicine case, and the woman, losing no second by a false motion or a clumsy finger, was tearing away the clothing from about the Professor's neck. She worked his arms and did not speak or look round as she bent to her task. She was unconscious of the Doctor at the table, but as the seconds assembled into a minute she realised that he was fluttering and fumbling with his medicines.

The Colonel's hands were pouring water upon

the ashen face, and his old legs were hurrying him to and fro from the laboratory with slopping beakers. She kept murmuring "Hurry!" over and over as she worked. Finally, at another half minute's end she turned quickly and saw the fumbling hands of the Doctor — the steel fingers fatuously wiggling, crazy and out of control. When she had turned back to her work her mind recorded to her consciousness that the fine forehead of the Doctor and his upper lip were beady with sweat. At that moment she did not see the devil shriving the Doctor's soul. For so desperately was she wrestling with death that she did not translate the meaning of the Doctor's visage, nor read the warning in his mad hands. She was breathing into her husband's lungs from her own lungs deep drafts of air; but when death and the devil came up behind her, as the Doctor moved, she glanced for a moment into his face, saw the bestial glint in his eyes, and saw a bestial slant to his slinking shoulders and swaying body and half rose to cry:

"Paul!"

The Doctor tried to answer, but his voice had slipped from its control. She repeated: "What's that? What's that?" looking at the medicine in

his hand. A whisper came sputtering out of the cruel animal mouth; she did not heed it. For their eyes met, and in the silence she understood him. With one free hand she knocked the medicine from the unsteady fingers. Half rising, she crouched over the body as if to shield it, and cried to her father: "Telephone for Doctor Roberts and Doctor Keller — quick!" Then, when her command had started her father to the telephone, she whispered to the Doctor: "Hide that medicine case. The other doctors must not think —"

Then she lost consciousness of the Doctor, and with no more tremor than a machine she held to her fight with death. Something back of her consciousness was directing that fight, something strong, capable, precise, indomitable.

The Doctor reached to touch the limp hand nearest to him, but from her distraught eyes a look sent him back ashamed. In that look she saw that the beast had left him. She saw his calm, professional face, gray and worn and haggard. "Come here and work — work!" she cried as she heard wheels scraping the gravel of the driveway and knew another doctor had arrived.

It was ten o'clock. Mrs. Nixon was talking to the *Globe* office and Elsie Barnes was at the other end of the wire. Mrs. Nixon was speaking clearly and so that the Doctor in the next room and the maids might hear: "You may say for me, in tomorrow's paper, that this accident naturally will keep me from my work on the Law and Order Committee until after the election, and that I have been compelled to resign from the chairmanship. You understand, Elsie?" Then the Colonel, standing by his daughter, heard her say: "Now, Elsie, call me up any time to-night if anything goes wrong."

The old man was wet-eyed and broken, not the strong old man he had been when he came laughing out of the laboratory less than two hours before. The voices of the trio of doctors in the sick room could be heard; but they were not excited voices. One laughed; another was trying to make the patient laugh. Doctor Kurtlin was evidently at the head of the stairs, coming down.

"Little girl, little girl!" cried the unsteady old voice. "I'm an old man, an old man, and they've cracked my old bones and they've put water in

my blood and broken my heart! But oh, my little girl, I've given you an Irish spirit and God loves the Irish — 'all's well with the world! ' "

He kissed her and made way for a child in her little nightie with braids down her back, coming to say her belated prayers. The mother fondled the girl for a second and set her kneeling, as the Doctor paused on the stair landing and gazed beseechingly across the little figure. The woman looked for a moment at the man, then shook her head, and the Colonel from his post down the corridor heard the front door open and close and felt the night wind blowing through the house.

PART III

When the Nixons came home from Europe — from their two years' sojourn in Europe — the Professor brought back sundry medals, degrees and honourable parchments from the universities in what the Colonel called the effete and crumbling capitals of Europe. And the town was properly impressed. But Lalla Rookh, she that was born Longford, brought back seven trunk-loads of plunder. And she gave a series of exhibitions for her

corals from Naples and cameos from Florence, for her beaten silver and scarfs from Rome, for her prints from Germany, for her millinery from Paris and her silks from London.

Then too she slipped through the custom-house before the very eyes of the inspectors a series of poses, which she used in her home — for practice — and when there was an audience, for applause; and these elaborate poses, that she had collected from the statuary of the museums, gave her such a classical effect that Archimedes spoke of her always as the Goddess of Longheath. From her face, which had taken form and colour from the galleries of Germany, it was obvious that she had some sort of notion that she was a kind of Madonna of the Clubs — the federated clubs.

But the most important thing she brought was a large oversoul — like, say, crinoline — which she seemed to have picked up somewhere in the North Country. She showed her hardware and shelf goods and goddess effects to the women of the city federation; she displayed her dry goods and millinery and madonnas to the Monday Music Club; but she kept her oversoul for her more particular friends. She got it out one night for the old

Colonel, but he shook his grizzled head and cried:

"To hell with it, Lally! And while we're a-talking, gel, let me break off a bit of my under-soul, which has been ingrowing for the two years I've been alone here with Archimedes downtown and the cat at the house; and you can as well take it now as any other time, and this is the size of it: Your first job in the cosmos is the kids! Your oversoul, spreading over the infinite and touchin' all the other gay young chips off the old block of primal energy or first cause or the billy-be-dee of your moonshine, is all very grand; but the kids have their rights to a motherin'!"

"But, Father, if a woman feels she has a higher mastery than —"

"Ah-h-h!" drawled the disgusted old man. "Lally, Lally, ye're like Paddy Mahone's dog — you're always goin' a bit of the way with 'em all and getting nowhere! Let me tell you something, daughter of my heart's core; and 'tis this: When the angels took the snip with the scissors that made you a woman, my darlin', they gave you the highest mastery in the world — the transmission of the life-stuff of the race from the last generation to

the next. You're the vessel, my gel, wherein the destiny of the race is bilin'. It isn't merely your body that's important, wherein the seeds are warmed into life; though that's much and that's why you should treat it like God's temple. The important thing is your soul, for trimmin' and prunin' and pickin' and sortin' and choosin' and shieldin' and passin' into reality the dreams of to-day. I don't mind your votin' and your agitatin' to make a better world about ye for the settin' of your workshop; that's part of your job, too, and I glory in your spunk, gel. But your job's in your workshop as sure as the Lord's in His holy temple, and don't let this damn nonsense about your over-soul hookin' you up with infinity tempt you away from a duty that makes you a part of God's plan of progress — little or big, as you have the heart and the skill for it — and as plain, Lally, as a boil on the back of your neck! "

Whereupon Lalla Rookh went to the piano and played a movement from Schubert's Unfinished Symphony and thought of the Doctor, and tried to remember why she hated him, or if she did hate him at all, and if it wasn't a sort of hang-over hate from their disagreement on a lower plane where

he had been an unpaternal tomcat and eaten all the offspring in their first meeting in the jungle, or something equally important. For she was convinced that her consciousness here was but the reflection of the phenomena of time and space upon some small apex of her submerged soul that sank deep into a cosmic iceberg floating in the sea of infinity. So she was vastly more concerned about bumping into other icebergs and freezing to them spiritually, as it were, than she was about the area of reflection in the mundane sun. The Doctor, however, held a low opinion of the iceberg theory. He was devoting himself with some degree of consistency and great enthusiasm to going to hell by the drug route. He seemed to have no time for Lalla Rookh and her cosmic theories.

So Mrs. Nixon went floating about as a goddess in her copious crinoline oversoul, touching a number of things that in reality did not exist! And the Nixon children's noses needed more or less attention, and their shoes went unsoled, and their little breeches were often sadly neglected. Now a handsome woman — and no one ever held that her transcendental rigging made her the less handsome or dimmed in the slightest the gorgeous beef-

steak dinners she gave to the Professor's Ion Club — a handsome woman who goes about in the seas of infinity, sailing mostly with the hatches down and scanning the lower currents of the universe for submarine craft, is liable before she knows it to be flying at the masthead of her ship, as a signal, a palpable and material petticoat, and waving it at such trousers as may heave in sight. For it's the way of all flesh!

The person who considers too seriously the caprices of his astral arrangements is playing dangerously near his emotions, and that is a slippery playground.

"I can't resist her," cried Elsie as the big, beautiful creature in a Paris street gown swept out of the office after leaving with the society reporter the programme of the Monday Music Club. "Charley, I simply can't resist her. She comes in here and kisses me and hugs me like a soft, perfumed, upholstered bear, and she holds my hand and makes love to me. And, Charley, I'm going to propose to her and elope with her if you don't keep her away!"

The advertising solicitor looked at the reporter a moment and shook his head sadly: "It's tough,

isn't it, Elsie?" He paused a moment and put his hand across her desk and began: "Elsie, Elsie —"

"Don't you come round here Elsieing me, Charley, at one-thirty, with the copy hook sticking up as bare as Pike's Peak and three machines going."

He tossed his head and rose, saying as he went: "All right, have it your way, Miss Porcupine. You don't have to throw your quills at —"

"Say, Charley, what do you think?" she called as she looked over the programme Mrs. Nixon had laid down. "They've discovered Jim!" To his lifting eyebrows she answered: "Why, our Jim — fighting Jim, the railroad reporter — the Monday Music Club has discovered Jim's voice and they've got him on the programme!"

"No. You don't mean it!"

"Well, here it is, big as life," and she read: "'Violets — James Lawton.' Fancy old Jim as a society bud! Oh, me! Oh, my! Now, who do you suppose?"

"Well," smiled the advertising solicitor wickedly, "if it's your goddess lady and she tries any of her 'endearing young charms' on Jim, she'll

live to regret it. Jim's been eating raw beef and chewing barbed wire for a year now to get in training to lick the yardmaster, and Jim's not up to much coddling."

He was a rather gaudily but poorly dressed and highly overbrushed young man who sat crossing and recrossing his legs in the big living-room of Longheath waiting for the Monday Music Club to assemble. He did not know that two-thirty meant three-fifteen with the music club. He was not temperamental. He was used to making trains and reading time-tables, and as he talked to the hostess he gripped his roll of sheet music as though it were his one hope of safety. She tried to talk art, and told him she had heard his voice had a dramatic quality. He grinned and wondered what Elsie would say when he told her that; also he wondered what a dramatic quality was. She knew it would be half an hour before the club assembled, so she tried to coax him to sing — and in coaxing discovered that he didn't know one note from another and that he sang entirely by ear.

Finally, after she had let him tell two or three stories about the social jealousies of Mrs. First Assistant Night-Wiper Martin and Mrs. Second

Assistant Cinderpit-Cleaner Gordon, who had secret ambitions that some day their husbands would be conductors, she wheedled him to the piano and, finding what he could sing, began to tempt him with wisps of accompaniment. Then for a moment he let out his big voice — the great bull-roar that he released in the press-room at night when he and the printers were washing up for the day, and it jarred the bric-à-brac noticeably, and more. Mrs. Nixon began gripping the keys of the piano as though they were the neck cords of her sweetest enemy. Also she lifted up what voice she had and sang a sort of tenor-alto until the tears came into her eyes.

When the members of the club began to arrive Jim kept standing by the piano, hoping she would ask him to sing again, and she had to lead him away by the arm. The membership of the club was composed largely of women; two men from the music department of the college came, and Jim sniffed at them and all but growled. He sat in the far corner where his hostess had put him, with his deep-black eyes watching her, craning his head sometimes to see her, holding his eyes on the door when she left the room and gazing intently at her hands

and arms as she came to him with a cup of tea. He took the tea, told her how the girl at the High Sign Lunch counter wouldn't give the switchmen saucers for fear they'd pour their coffee in the saucers and disgust all the swell trade, and then, being on his feet, he followed her much like a dog all over the room, and she could not get rid of him — even if she really had cared to. But she was salvaging him in her over-soul, and it was a joyful sensation.

She literally had to put him out of the house, following the departure of the last lingering guest. Young Mr. Lawton lounged leisurely down the winding walk and, seeing the Colonel working with a pruning hook among the trees, sauntered over to him and called: "Say, Colonel, swell joint you got here. I hadn't never been here but once — that night the Prof was electrocuted, and I didn't get to see much of it then."

The Colonel looked the youth over and laughed: "How did you get out the front way?"

"Sang my way in and sang my way out. I'm a Tyrolean warbler all right, Colonel, didn't you know about that? Well, 'the pride of the whole house is papa's babee,' eh, Colonel?"

The pruning shears snapped and the old man moved away: "Gwan wid ye, Jimmy Lawton. I knew your father when he was caterin' in a livery stable and yer mother when you could hear her singin' over the dishes at the Astor House half a mile away. You in society! Music, heavenly maid, is hard up for company!"

Jim told this ten minutes later at the office and we had a laugh about it. But after we had endured three days of what they did at the musicale, how they dressed, what they had to eat, what they said, why and how and when they said it, with the words "swell women" jangling interminably through his talk over and over, morning, noon and night, until it was plain that Jim was getting a fixed idea, Elsie called the big reporter in and preached at him:

"Cut it out, Jimmy; they're not your kind of people. You can't trot in that class; it'll only bring you trouble. They'll listen to you sing and laugh at your manners. Don't go up there again." But the flush that she saw in his cheeks and the fire in his eyes could not be quenched.

It was a sad day for the *Globe* office when Jimmy took to society. After three months at the

college music department, where they taught him to open his mouth and to slip in extra syllables in his singing words by way of emotional emphasis, the head waitress at the railroad eating house saw that there was no chance for her. He would hurry over his beat like a hound, picking up bits of news, then scurry back to his music lessons. He quit chumming with the head pit man in the roundhouse and the switch shanty knew him no more. But he lowered no flag to the yardmaster, and still told the reporters in the office that some day the yardmaster would appear with what Jimmy called the "fixin's" on him. Jim held his job, of course; but that was all. He invested his substance in evening clothes as gorgeous as his Sunday suit was gaudy, and Elsie thought she could see the eye of Lalla Rookh in the design of Jimmy's de-luxe regalia. It had a vague European air that was foreign to New Raynham.

But they certainly were helping the young man's voice at the college, and in the spring he had a solo part in the oratorio at the musical festival and bellowed most feelingly through several hours of pure music. In the town's society, where Jimmy often, like little Tom Tucker, sang for his supper,

he was known as Mrs. Nixon's "Golden Musical Discovery," and the years between their ages made it easy for him to get to heel without attracting much comment. If only she had not kept such a tight leash on him! But that was the trouble; he would sing and do his parlour tricks only on her order; indeed he would accept only such invitations as came through her. She played all his accompaniments and took him to the city to hear grand opera. She bought quires of music of a kind new to the town, which had become fairly used to Wagner; and at the Monday Music Club she would set Jimmy to barking on the new scores — tuneless, formless, and often inharmonious musical chatter, full of emotional yelps and groans and moans and complainings that shocked Colonel Longford into language.

As for the Professor, he would often stand behind his glasses, looking rather than listening.

And thus slowly Lalla Rookh sapped out Jimmy Lawton's soul. For a time — perhaps for nearly a year — the youth's heart was lava. And she let him glow and blew upon the fire all her airs and graces. She had to struggle to keep him to heel; he was forever about to paw her and rub

against her. But she was wise and he was young. Then came the day that she wished for, when the lava vaporised and Jimmy was all but mad. In his vapid state she could handle him with a breath. He was the soul of devotion, and no one knew how completely she had captured him. But the old Colonel suspected and was wroth. He used to cover up his head with his handkerchief and pretend to sleep in the living-room when Lalla Rookh and Jimmy were digging away at their music. The old man saw the youth's eyes at such times; the poor fellow's hands and feet were in a deep submission. But he saw his daughter's eyes, and her hands were still free, and once he startled the singers with a mighty oath as he cried: "Let that boy's hair alone, I tell you. He's got a comb, Lalla; he can take care of it!" And after that when he pretended to sleep they stuck to the score. When the two were alone Lalla Rookh filled Jimmy's head full of tall talk of their souls. And she built up for him an elaborate fable about the union of their spirits on another plane. She read Emerson to him — fancy Jimmy taking on Emerson — and Wordsworth and Jean Paul! But he didn't even blink at it, but looked dog-like into her

eyes and heard her soft, purring voice in an ecstasy.

Even if the Colonel alone had been watching the young man he would have had trouble enough in store for him; for the Colonel was hoarding his wrath. But gradually he also noticed that whenever Jimmy was at Longheath Doctor Kurtlin's new red racing car would come panting by, always once, sometimes twice, and occasionally three and four times. The Colonel had nothing to do but to fumble his cane and watch. Perhaps the others did not notice what was happening. But when he saw the Doctor's car whizzing past the house so regularly the old man was distraught with fear.

A pitiful figure in the town was Doctor Kurtlin. His practice was going; his clean, trim body was slumping; his ruddy skin was reddening; his fine eyes were dilating and glazing, and the fires of the pit gleamed from every window of his soul. And the Colonel saw it and hesitated, for it is the habit of age to wait; and the Professor saw it and was wounded with a deep shame.

And Jimmy Lawton saw it, and, knowing what the *Globe* office knew, he snarled at the Doctor,

and bristled by him when they passed on the street and met each other's sidelong glance of hate.

Thus stood the clock when Professor Nixon started to Cambridge to receive his degree. He left Lalla Rookh and Jimmy and the children at the dinner table munching nuts, and the Colonel took the Professor to the seven-forty train in Mrs. Nixon's electric runabout. When the children had cleared out, Jimmy and Mrs. Nixon went to the veranda. Down in the railroad yards — and in all his philandering Jimmy never took his ear from the voice of the yards — he heard the four long screams of the eastbound limited. "There she comes, right on the dot! She'll be pulling out in three minutes." But before his voice had paused he heard from the yards the hoarse hoots of a great freight mogul in warning or distress. A commotion followed and a little switch engine in the west end of the yards began to clamour and the switch engine in the east end made reply. Then he heard her bell clanging as she hurried westward. Ten years of training told him there was trouble in the yards, and he went to the telephone and called up the switch shanty.

"Anything serious?" asked Mrs. Nixon as the young man came back to his porch chair.

"Oh, nothing to speak of—two or three freight cars are ditched at Number seven switch down in the west yards." He grinned. "Grief for that boarding-house gladiator who goes round with yardmaster on his cap. I told him that switch was blinky."

In due course they heard the electric come up and disappear in the garage at the back of the house, and Lalla Rookh heard her father's step in the living-room behind them, and when he had fumbled over the evening paper she heard him mount the stairs. It was a soft June night and her heart was hungry for excitement, the kind of excitement that sometimes gnawed at her vitals like a poison. She sat in her swinging chair and played upon Jimmy with all her wiles. She thought she heard her father move across the room behind her and lowered her voice. A little later she went into the room and turned off all the lights save one in the rear, a low reading lamp before a large table. It shed a respectable twilight in the great room, and when she heard her father moving about

in the room directly above her she let all her devils out to play.

The horrible roar of the Doctor's racing car in the street attracted her attention, but did not divert her from her feline joy in the game with the mouse.

Again the automobile roared past, and again, the snarling, whining devil in the hood lifting a fearsome voice. In the roar she had to lift her voice to be heard for an instant, and she did not realise that behind her, sitting at the reading lamp, her husband was writhing in his soul as he heard her false, overstrained voice and felt upon his heart the searing feet of all the devils which she played with so wantonly.

He had been sitting there a long time, it seemed to him, waiting for his delayed train. The voice of the woman — the fondling, intense, excited voice of the woman, and the hoarse, suppressed man's voice in broken phrases — finally had driven him mad. He tiptoed back to his laboratory and returned, bringing in one hand a beaker filled with yellowish, cloudy liquid and in the other a little white clod. He sat for a time balancing the clod over the glass loosely in his fingers, and her voice

purred on. A child's shrill, gay, pillow-fighting voice came to him from a distant bedroom. Then he laid down the potassium cyanide gently on the table and sat listening half listlessly with closed eyes to the dialogue on the veranda. He dropped his head on his arm and his body shook in sobs as he pushed with a blind hand the glass and little white lump to a farther corner of the table.

Again he heard outside the roar of the Doctor's car; then the car slowed down and he heard it come snorting up the driveway to the veranda.

He was on his feet as his wife screamed, and he heard a scuffle and a shot and saw the flash through the window curtain, high up in the air, as though the revolver had been pointed toward the ceiling.

"Bring him in, Jim, bring him indoors. Don't! The whole neighbourhood is ears!" It was Lalla Rookh whimpering, and a moment later through the door came two male forms, clinched. In the great, muscular arms of the youth the spent little Doctor was struggling feebly, his cocaine courage oozing and his strength all gone. At the noise of the shot and the scuffle the Colonel had come limping down the stairs with his cane, and stood behind the group that faced the Professor. The old

man saw the hulking body of the Professor, half risen, half crouching, with his hands out like a bear's paws; he saw the wizened, trembling, bent body of the Doctor reaching futilely up for his pistol in Jimmy's hand, and the canine teeth of Jimmy all but snapping.

The old man, with eyes blazing and bloodshot, stood gathering strength, then broke the silence with a wail — a long "Ah." Then he spoke:

"Ah, Lally, Lally, ye're the evil spirit of the glen, the witch of Bryan's Moor, the very same, the witch herself!" He stood panting in the shamed silence and went on: "And every man that's come to your bower is turned to beast. Look at them here, the little jackal and this dirty dog and yonder great ragin' bear. My God, Lally, is this what ye've made of your life — the witch of Bryan's Moor!" When he began to cry the spell broke.

The Doctor, wiggling weakly out of the youth's strong arm, sank face down on a sofa, moaning miserably. Fear had taken the colour from Jimmy's face; he was in a strange place and could not find himself. The Professor saw the woman, in a flash of horror, looking at the beaker of hydro-

cloric acid. He pointed mutely at the white lump at the other side of the table and cried:

"And this was to finish us both — all three probably!" His face still was drawn and pain-wracked as he went on: "That is the beast your enchantment made of me, Lalla!"

The Colonel's body began to straighten as his spent strength came back. He turned in rising rage to the shame-ridden woman, whose bare shoulders and neck were reddening. She bent her eyes to the floor and would have left the room had not the Colonel barred the way. Wrath was burning — a mounting, beating flame in his massive old head, over the face, through the veins at the temples up into the thin, soft, shaggy hair. His voice was choked as he began speaking, but it rang out fiercely as he went on:

"Maybe to see the devil in yer heart will help you to cast him out and clean you — I dunno — I dunno! But, Lally gel, this is the secret of your damned witchery — it is yer hellish selfishness. That's what turned 'em all to beasts about you, yer black-hearted selfishness. I that begot ye, know ye, ye witch of Bryan's Moor! It's for yerself, yerself, yer own pleasure, is all yer philan-

thropies and all yer philanderin'— all fer yerself! Ye have taken and taken and taken — and give nothing. Ye were too selfish in all yer lovin' to give the boys even a bit of a kiss by way of diversion — not one small nibblin's of a kiss would ye give 'em, Lally Rookh, and for why? I'll tell ye. Not that ye were too good and didn't want it a thousand times and more; but ye were too greedy to call yourself a good and virtuous woman, too damn selfish for the bit of a kiss for your own beasties that ye made with the witchery of yer own greedy guts of selfishness. Ye never loved any of them, not even Gregory here; but ye like the comforts of home. It's a pleasant thing to have a day-cint home and a kind man about; so ye come runnin' here when yer enchanted menagerie gets too hot for you. Ah-h-h-h," he wailed, "and now that I'm near the great White Door I'm fay — I'm fay and can see it."

And his great high voice was ringing clearly with no tremor or break as he shook his snow-white mane and cried: "She's my own begotten flesh and I know how to handle her!"

He stepped to her, waving his cane, and three men stood by and saw the stick come whistling

down on the woman's bare back and shoulders. The white welt reddened, then oozed blood, and no one moved. Nor did the woman cry.

The Colonel stood looking at her a minute as she shook with sobs. Then the old man turned to the two terror-smitten intruders and brandished his stick, calling:

"Clear out! Clear out of here the both of ye!" A moment later he left the husband and wife alone.

As he looked back he saw the man coming back into the Professor's troubled face, and on the landing of the stairs he saw him bending over her as she sat shamed and broken. The husband's face was full of tears. He was covering her bruised flesh. Then from afar the Colonel heard, and knew the others heard, a child's lonely, frightened voice, calling:

"Mamma! Mamma!" And again the cry:
"Mamma!"

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Like a thousand secrets that came to the office, we knew the story of that night. Partly from Jimmy we had it in terror; partly through Archi-

medes from the Colonel; partly from the very air that gathers such things like dew. It was one hot August night, when a cool breeze was just beginning to stir the elm trees of the town, and Elsie was helping the advertising solicitor paste up his monthly string and make his monthly report.

They were talking of Jimmy — poor Jimmy who was coming in agony out of his enchantment back to the head waitress in the eating house, and back to his chum in the cinder pit. It was Elsie who spoke of the goddess of Longheath. “She’s a strange woman — a strange woman!” mused the girl.

“A strange woman,” repeated Charley, sighing; “and ‘her feet go down to death.’”

“Oh, well, Charley, I don’t know. So far as that goes, so are we all strange women — some of the time — all of us. But, Charley,” cried the woman gently, “one of us was chosen as the first witness to the Great Resurrection!”

“THE ONE A PHARISEE”

PART I

BOYCE KILWORTH was a kind of congenital Prominent Citizen. His mother it was — and that the year before Boyce came into the world — who rose in New Raynham Colony before the Civil War and stamped out the Fourierism that Enoch Thacher and the Williams College group were fostering. The whole notion of communism upset Mrs. Kilworth's gorge. “Not that I object to their free lovin’,” she was wont to say, “for they only talk about that, and ain't got quite the courage for it; but what I do oppose, and shall ever pray against, is this givin' up of the work of our hands to a lot of lazy louts that want to sit around in them phalanxes and talk about what their predilections of labour is, without strikin' a lick of work. I've got the Bible for my property, and I'm goin' to keep it.” And she did. When baby Boyce was born, Mrs. Kilworth's property

consisted of one town lot segregated from the communal holdings, one rangy roan cow of long-horned ancestry, and one brown mound in the new, bleak, treeless graveyard on the gravel hill above the town, wherein rested the body of the large, placid, amiable person who had agreed with every one and who was Boyce Kilworth's father. With the cow and certain pigs that lived on the skimmed milk and the slops of her kitchen, Mrs. Kilworth founded her fortune. With the cow's increase and the pig's progeny she established a boarding house of great respectability, and when little Boyce was almost through the common schools Mrs. Kilworth, being of an acquisitive nature, married her star boarder, the Rev. Winthrop Hale, a town father. He was one of the Williams College group, who, when the town company's property was divided, had accepted as his allotment twenty acres of raw prairie half a mile from the town pump, all nicely divided into town lots, the concrete representation of all the fine dreams and high hopes of an impetuous youth. With the town lots and her star boarder, Mrs. Kilworth also acquired one step-son, Caleb, aged five, whom she took up as her cross. But if Caleb

was her cross, little Boyce, ten years older, was his mother's crown. And after Winthrop Hale had wandered off, rather inadvertently and entirely intestate, to his supernal reward, Boyce Kilworth's mother died triumphant in the blessed knowledge that her son, just turning twenty, would have a little property in his own right, and was almost ready to run for a county office of honour and profit.

Two fundamental principles she had dinned into him until they were part of his nature: First, you must be respectable; second, you must get on in the world — ("on," being translated, meant property — your own property). When as a youth in his teens he had prepared the clerk's roll with bogus names and had been an accessory before the fact of the ballot box stuffing that brought New Raynham the county seat, sympathy for him as an exemplary son of an exemplary mother kept the rival town from pushing the case against him. A few years later when it was found that, as county treasurer, he was lending the county's money and appropriating the interest to himself, the fact that the loans he made were good loans, all to respectable people, and all paid in full, gave Judge Lad-

gett of the district bench an excuse for quashing the indictment against Boyce Kilworth. And not one session did he miss as superintendent of his Sunday School while the action was pending against him. Always he was respectable; always he got on. He went from the county treasurer's office into a bank that he owned within three years after he helped to start it, and from the first day of his ownership until the day he died he was Eminently Respectable.

Which was more than ever could be said of his step-brother, Caleb Hale. The Winthrops and the Hales took the orphaned Caleb back to New England, sent him through Phillips Exeter Academy, schooled him at Harvard, and then, having visions of the wealth that Winthrop Hale had left in the town lots in the growing village of New Raynham, they shipped young Hale west, with his Harvard degree and a ticket to the scene of his father's glory. The pious letters of his step-brother had built Caleb's hopes high. But when he sought to realise on his hopes, he found that a perfectly balanced statement of the assets and liabilities, income and expenditures, gains and losses, of the Hale estate was all that Boyce Kilworth

had to show for their joint patrimony. And the impetuous, unparliamentary language of youth, rashly cast at his step-brother, was all the satisfaction Caleb Hale had in return for his loss — that and a rather frigid esteem for all Sunday-school superintendents.

But Boyce Kilworth made a point — an exclamation point, as it were — of publicly forgiving Caleb for his sneers and slurs, and went on suffering in silence and selling the Winthrop Hale lots in secret in Joel Ladgett's name, thus showing to a sinful world how the righteous prosper. Young Charley Herrington at one time had more money than Boyce Kilworth, but never was so Eminently Respectable. Colonel Longford made fun of Boyce Kilworth's celluloid collars, his ready-made ties, his clothes five years behind the mode, his occasional lapses into have-sawisms of speech and manners; but with all Colonel Longford's learning, with all his ease and grace of bearing — he did serve toddy to his guests, he did let his past due paper accumulate in the banks, occasionally was sued, and was suspected of bearing something more than a widower's gallantry in his attentions to the sex. So the Colonel was not

Eminently Respectable. And as for Boyce's step-brother, Caleb Hale, for all his New England lineage, for all his exact sartorial regularity, for all his Harvard degree, he gambled — gambled at cards while the whole town was debauching itself gambling in real estate — and that was the end of him. But Boyce Kilworth got on with Eminent Respectability.

Naturally, when Boyce Kilworth married he married property. “He worships it,” laughed Caleb Hale, comfortably drunk for the wedding; “so why not marry it? And if he gets a pretty girl in the bargain — well and good.” She was a pretty girl, was Matilda Venable, and it was she who gave him his first taste for omnipotence. He picked out all the furniture for their home — the kitchen furniture, the table linen, the bedding, the carpets for the front room — and bought her kitchen apron with the outfit. After that he bought her dresses, bought her underwear, and when the babies began to come he sent home the muslin and linen from which she made the little things after patterns Boyce selected. And, being a banker — the only banker in the town without a past — and having developed a talent as a

Providence for his family, the town came under his sphere of influence and he became the Providence of New Raynham; this before he was thirty-five.

Boyce Kilworth was the Commercial Club; gradually he assumed the functions of his party conventions in the town and county and congressional district; he built the Methodist Church, bought the organ — paying his share of the bills, naturally, but not much more — was chairman of the Public Library Committee, president of the Humane Society, chief stockholder by virtue of his promoting ability of the Brick and Tile Company, the Canning Company, the Fair Association, and even the Gun Club. And Boyce Kilworth made all these things go. He was tireless, and as he grew into his late thirties he became effective. In other towns there was a general complaint that the Commercial Club did nothing. In other towns men were forever buying stock in enterprises that were supposed to help the town, and the enterprises failed. In other towns near New Raynham the Committee on Industries got nothing more important than a coffin factory or a planing mill or a buggy and carriage works — miserable little two

or three men affairs that always had to be stimulated by assessments of the stockholders, and then finally moved away. But the things that Boyce Kilworth brought to New Raynham thrived and stayed. And incidentally it was found that Boyce owned either a majority of the stock or a controlling minority, and reaped his reward in substantial things. He horned young Charley Herrington so completely out of the local financial situation that Herrington took his talents to other fields and only used the Herrington bank as a financial coaling station. So the two financiers hated each other with a low, steady voltage, lied casually about each other, and sneered at each other in private, letting it go at these amiable amenities.

Three little Kilworth girls in very stiff pigtails and very stiff petticoats and very high noses rode with their fond parents to Sunday School every Sunday morning in a family surrey of great price. A tall, pompous, heavy-jowled, bearded man was Boyce Kilworth in his thirties; black as to whiskers, and ponderous; black as to hair and eyes, deep voiced, slow-spoken, and sententious. “Yell at Brother Boyce,” hooted Caleb Hale, “and if he

forgets himself he'll say 'I seen.' So he takes it slow."

Profoundly impressed with the conventions was Boyce Kilworth; vastly, elaborately, and creakingly polite was he to "the ladies," and all women were "ladies" with him. He gave the impression of a knight in a full stock of armour, shelf goods, and general hardware when a woman hove in sight, and with the stiffness of his bowing and scraping one felt that his armour was new and needed oil. At home Mrs. Kilworth lived in an attitude of devotion, with hands clasped on her bosom, when Boyce was about. In the bank, when they heard his keys jingling in the back door at seven-thirty every morning, the bank began to turn on its stools and chairs, and ledger leaves began to rustle audibly, and in town no one cared to tempt Providence by a jibe — no one but Caleb Hale.

In the midst of the shabbily pretentious lobby of the Astor House was a double-faced writing desk; and, dividing the faces of the desk, rose a gaudy glass screen. In the screen were various advertisements of New Raynham business houses, — most of the advertisements sadly out of date,

and none of the advertisements so sadly out of date as the one announcing "Caleb Hale, Stockman — Dealer in Cattle, Sheep, and Hogs," giving the number of his "office" in the Herrington block. For it was known of all the town that the "cattle" (and he did deal in cattle), the "sheep" (and many a poor sheep followed blindly its leader to Caleb's shears), and finally the "hogs" (many greedy swine looking for something for nothing), were of the two-legged kind. But before Caleb Hale recognised the irony of his sign he had travelled a long and devious way into the far country.

At first as a youth fresh from Harvard, with a seven-devil lust for betting on things, taking gay chances on anything from an election to a funeral procession, Caleb Hale did busy himself as a speculator in live stock. But it was the speculation, not the live stock, that interested him; he bought cattle in such large quantities that for a few years he was known as "Trainload Hale." The big winnings and the big losses built up a passion in him for gambling, and he began keeping a poker table with its equipment in his office for his friends among the stockmen. His office was a loafing place for stock-growers from a dozen counties,

and when the market game grew dull and dreary Caleb added roulette for the diversion of his friends. Gradually he found that poker offered more excitement than stock buying, so he let business slump. In the beginning he excused himself because the market was hysterical and unprofitable. At first he had a pretence that he allowed no one but stock buyers in his room — and of course a few particular friends. But as the mania for gambling held him tighter and tighter, his "particular friends" increased, and the time came when the right kind of a knock would make any man Caleb Hale's "particular friend." And only the stockman's wide white hat, the stockman's flannel shirt, and the stockman's grey tweed clothes of the period gave Caleb Hale an excuse for keeping up his pretence that he was a stockman. But even then he kept the daily telegraphic report of the stock market posted above his faro table. Dapper, smooth-shaven, flaxen-haired; of mobile features, and with a quick, sensitive blue eye; a good boxer, a welterweight athlete; fond of books and Colonel Longford; fond of horses and Charley Herrington; fond of women and constrained to "neither east nor west nor border nor breed nor

birth ” in his choice; fond of a flute in a summer’s twilight, and patron royal of those bands of strolling Italians, with harp and violin and cello, that once infested Western America; quick tempered; soft-spoken and merciless in a game — such was Caleb Hale at thirty — the Caleb Hale who wooed Vashti Sellers, the compositor in the *Globe-Times* office. Wooing was no novelty for Vashti. Her love affairs the office counted as the sands of the sea. But this particular courtship had the gorgeous distinction of being the scandal of the *Globe* office. The other girl printers with fathers and mothers to warn them were inclined to draw their skirts about them a little at Vashti in the midst of this particular young dream of love. The foreman’s wife — only a year from the composing room herself — tried to talk to Vashti about Caleb, to tell her of half a dozen other girls who had flown into the light of his countenance like moths. But she would shake her head and smile sometimes, and shake her head and cry at other times, but always would shake her head. And just when the rattle of his red-wheeled cart near where Vashti lived, was waking the neighbours far after midnight, just when her

printer's proofs by day were so full of errors that it took more time to correct the proofs than to set the type, just as the stories of her relations with Caleb Hale had become so common that she found herself walking alone on the streets, just as the spring rush of work was making it almost impossible to discharge her on any but an obvious pretext — Caleb Hale married her. And he married her largely because she was a challenge. He took the bet that her red lips, her pink cheeks, her gorgeous figure, her bright, animal eyes — in truth, the bet that the whole physical lure of her made with his common sense: That he would be miserable with her when he got her. And because he had made the bet with his eyes open, because he knew the value of the stake, he held it a point of honour never to welsh on that bet and never to whine about it. Their baby was born for their Christmas present, and that bound the bargain with Caleb Hale. Their life together was long, stormy, often tempestuous, but Caleb Hale's soul never listed to port and never sheathed a sail. If the gaudy plumage she affected, the rampant colours that she loved, the pretensions of the clothes she piled on, ever sickened him, no

one — not even Colonel Longford in the most intimate moments of their boon companionship — ever had a hint of Caleb's disgust or the remote basis for a guess at it. It may be said in passing, however, that the colonel, in his hours of ease at the *Globe* office, used to indicate that he was living in lively anticipation of the sad day when Caleb would have to go out and kill some man as a slight return for Vashti's foolishness.

At first the Hales lived in one of the sharp-gabled, bow-windowed, turreted, wooden houses in a row far out among the saplings where Caleb could have a garden, which was his heart's desire. As they paid their rent a year in advance and made their own repairs, and as Caleb was planting a maze of shrubs and hardy annuals about the place, improving it greatly, the complaint about the invasion of the neighbourhood by an undesirable family achieved no result with the agent of the Boyce Investment Company at the Traders' National Bank. Caleb Hale, moving among men as a gay young blade with a past that projected itself well into the future, had felt little of society's disapproval. He knew that the neighbours had complained when he moved among them with his bride,

but it amused him, and Vashti was too busy with her grand furniture and her baby clothes to care much what the neighbours thought. But by the time the baby was two years old Caleb Hale began to feel the prick of the neighbourhood's disapproval. Vashti complained that when she was wheeling the little one along the sidewalk mothers called in their children; that when she took little Dick out for a walk, and he toddled into a neighbour's yard or ran away up the steps of a neighbouring house, doors were barred against him; no kindly hand led him back to her. He was put off the porch and started home, and left to his own devices. A day came when Vashti told Caleb that a child in the block had referred to the little fellow as "the gambler's boy." So twice in a year Caleb left a garden and moved his household goods, but each neighbourhood was like the other neighbourhood, and as the child grew older the father began to fear that the little fellow would feel his isolation. Caleb cluttered the child about with a wilderness of toys — toys that other children's parents could not afford. But little Dick often would lay them down to run vainly after the other children, or, playing with the toys, would look

up to see a group of children looking at him in envy, but askance. And Vashti grew petulant — and probably mean. So they wrangled — man and wife — and the little fellow's heart was hurt.

Caleb, bound to his Puritan training, felt the moral responsibility of parenthood upon him, and began teaching little Dick the rudiments of a code. But he had to gulp his own shortcomings that rose within him, and his Yankee self-respect was wounded. The low esteem in which he held his step-brother had been a cherished jewel in his moral crown until he saw the little pig-tailed Kilworth girls going by to Sunday School. In spite of all his carping, he did want little Dick to go to Sunday School. The Kilworth's could go to Sunday School; little Dick in the nature of things did not go to Sunday School; there was an inequality that galled him. After a session with little Dick, answering the child's questions, and knowing that a day would come when the growing child would be ashamed to ask the questions that went to the quick in the father's heart, it took three man's-size drinks at the sideboard in his “ office ” to restore Caleb Hale's equanimity. So he tried to pickle a certain area of his self-respect in liquor, and the

pickling roiled the soul of Vashti, who had no idea of letting liquor get the better of her husband, and as she was a strong woman beneath her vain surface, Caleb Hale's way lay among thorns. Men on Constitution Street said, "Hale is drinking too much." This hurt his standing among men more than his profession hurt it.

It was a bright May morning, and late enough for Colonel Longford, who was of a sedentary habit, to be down on Constitution Street shedding the light of his fine Irish countenance on the town, when Caleb Hale came hurrying along. Always he walked as if he were going to some particular place on an appointment a few minutes overdue, but the Colonel knew better, and stretched out the hook of a great arm and dragged the little man into a group.

"Shake hands with Brother Boyce here, Cale," roared the Colonel. "Another girl; four now — four queens: a pretty good hand to fill to, eh, Cale?"

Kilworth reached down a cold hand, and the gambler shook it with all the fervour of a man weighing a pound of snakes. The banker looked knowingly at the Colonel, and began: "Colonel

— can't we get him to quit — to get into some other calling? ”

Hale flushed angrily, and the Colonel put out a quieting hand:

“ Steady, Caleb — steady, my boy,” and being encouraged, Kilworth let his soft, ingratiating voice saw its way into the gambler's heart:

“ Colonel, here we have a smart man — a very smart man, Colonel — who is wasting his time and talents — and worse, Colonel — and worse. Why, let me tell you, Colonel — ”

Caleb tried to wriggle out of the Colonel's grasp, but the older man held him, while the banker went on: “ He's moved three times since he was married — and why? It's his peculiar business, Colonel, and the neighbours. That's why. And moving costs money. I tell you it cuts down his profits — such as they are! ”

The Colonel looked a question, and Caleb, white with wrath, stood trying to pierce the bland, dead-black eyes of Kilworth, with the steel-blue eyes that had shot terror into many another soul. “ Colonel,” asked Kilworth unctuously, “ can't we get him into something more regular? ”

Hale stuck out his lean jaw and replied:

"The difference between us, Brother Boyce, being, of course, that I give them a chance, and you rob them without it. I gamble, run a straight game, take my percentage, win or lose, and you charge two per cent. a month to the poor, seven per cent. a year when you can, and six per cent. to the rich! I guess it's about an even break."

Kilworth turned away, calling back: "Talk to him, Colonel — you understand poor Caleb even better than I."

Looking at the portly figure disappearing in the bank door, Caleb Hale sneered: "The psalm-singing, canting hypocrite!" But the Colonel said: "I'm sorry, Cale, that it happened," as he pressed the quivering arm he held kindly. "And now, Cale, tell me — what about that moving?"

"It's the boy, Colonel, and the long-nosed she-pelicans; they're jealous of all his toys," returned Hale bitterly. "They won't let their children play with him."

The two men walked down the street, and the Colonel said artlessly: "Pretty fine boy that — your little Dick." The father smiled acquiescence. "Good blood in him! Good New England blood, Cale," the Colonel persisted. Then he

added: “ He ought to have his chance — the best chance in the world, Cale.”

The Colonel's words touched to the quick the gambler's heart. He turned to the older man and burst forth: “ He'll be four years old next Christmas, Colonel. Not a day has passed in those years that I haven't had that on me — all the time ! ”

They walked in silence for a minute; then the Colonel screwed up his courage to say softly: “ Cale — Cale, my boy, they're not jealous of the boy's toys, those mothers; we both know better than that.”

They had come to the stairway leading to Hale's gambling room. The Colonel shook his head and stood hesitating at the foot of the stairs: when he looked up he found the keen, blue eyes of Hale looking into the bearded old face.

“ They're not caring about his toys, Cale,” the Colonel spoke gently, and then said: “ It's because he's the gambler's son.”

Their eyes met for a moment, and the Colonel touched the gambler's arm fondly, and his voice had in it the affection one shows only to the well-beloved as he added:

"Well, think it over, Cale, anyway."

The younger face reddened, and the hard, mean voice of Caleb Hale cut back miserably: "So it's you, too — you too!" and he ran quickly up the stairs.

But all day and all night the words "The gambler's son" burned into him. And the deeply affectionate, uplifted face of the old Colonel stared at Caleb from the cards. About midnight he noticed that an old man who had been losing more or less steadily — an old man of a miner's cast of face — was trying to put up as stakes some kind of a paper. Caleb walked over to the table, picked up the document, and looked it over, but the words "The Son of a Gamboleer" jumped out at him from the paper. He held himself from starting visibly. Then cried sharply: "What's this?"

"A deed to my mine, in El Paso County, Colorado," replied the man. "Do you want it for — for five hundred?"

Hale smiled and shook his head, then asked: "What's it worth?"

"They offered me eight hundred for it out there last week."

"How much are you to the bad to-night here, grandpa?" queried the gambler, looking at the excited old face and fluttering hands.

"Well, I think — let me see — ninety-seven and a half will cover it."

"Better get up from there," replied Hale. "Come over here. I'll give you a thousand dollars for this. I might as well buy it as anything else. Where'd you get that name?"

"What? 'The Son of a Gamboleer'?"

Caleb nodded.

"Oh, I dunno. That's what the feller who prospected it called it. I traded him two burros and a side of bacon for it last fall, and run a tunnel myself this winter. It's near some good workings!"

Hale looked at the old man, who seemed fearful lest his customer should slip away from him.

The old man persisted: "Have your lawyer look it over. I ain't in no hurry."

"Oh, to the devil —" began Hale. "You look honester than any lawyer. I just got this hunch, and I'm going to risk it."

The man rose.

"Now sail out of here, and come up in the morning and we'll make out the papers."

But Hale woke in the morning with rage in his heart — rage and a strange feeling of unrest and reproach against the world. The prattle of the youngster irritated the father, and he shuddered away from the child guiltily. The ancient college song with the refrain: "I'm a son-of-a-son-of-a-son-of-a-son-of-a-gamboleer" stuck in the man's head and became fixed. Every succession of sounds fell into the rhythm that called up that tune, and it poured gall into his heart. As he shaved he broke into the song, hating himself for his weakness, and little Dick, sitting in his nightie watching his father as a lower creature adoring one of the high gods at sacred rites, asked:

"Daddy, what is a gamboleer?"

And when the child insisted on an answer the father put him off, and the mother from the bedroom cried tauntingly:

"Why don't you tell the boy, Cale? I'd tell him if I was you."

Then the devil stalked forth in that house and

the husband went out after breakfast slamming the door behind him.

But Boyce Kilworth, being of the elect and anointed, had no such tempestuous moments as these in his life. He had, of course, an occasional perplexity over the prosperity of the sinful, but the banker brushed the cobwebs of his perplexity aside as he entered his holy temple every morning and sat down to his desk. He got out his interest book — a well-thumbed Bible it was — and began to estimate how much he should put on time deposit to be compounded annually for his newest little daughter's dower to make hers exactly equal to the sums the other girls had. When Esther came she had a hundred, and at compound interest two years and three months and fourteen days later it had earned \$13.47. The enlarged sum he placed to Ruth's account the day she was born and later a similar amount to Mary's. And now eighteen months later he must start little Deborah equal with the others, and it gave him a thrill of pleasure to dream how much it would be when she was twenty-one — how much each of the girls would have! So he sent in the deposit slip, made

out a bank book for little Deborah, and turned to the business of the hour. It was the new tin mill — a kind of a woodshed industry. Two men and a boy were running the plant, and they owed the bank \$4,450 for their machinery, and were getting in deeper every month. Still, the book profits were there and money was comfortably loose, so he decided to risk another month's losses; for the gain, if profits should accrue, would be large, and if they failed he could, of course, unload the concern upon the bank. After he had gone over the month's business with the owner of the machinery — or the man who thought he would be owner — Kilworth stalked forth to pervade Constitution Street, walking with a wide, swinging movement from his hips. He met Colonel Longford just turning into the stairway where the sign "Caleb Hale, Stockman — Dealer in Cattle, Sheep, and Hogs," was creaking in the afternoon breeze. As Kilworth's eyes glanced from the sign, they met Colonel Longford's, and Kilworth began:

"Ah, Colonel — just what I've been thinking about — our recent talk with Caleb. The poor fellow is throwing away his opportunities. He's

not developing the right faculties. He's not acquisitive.” The banker put a patronising arm on the Colonel's shoulder. “Colonel, it's a gift — the acquisitive faculty. I turn over a park to the city that cost me three thousand, and make five right back on abutting town lots. Caleb is wasting his time; he should learn to accumulate, and his peculiar business doesn't teach acquisitiveness. I thank God he has given me this acquisitive faculty, and that I am not like other men who —”

“Well, Boyce,” laughed the Colonel in his deep Irish basso, “ye've distinguished Bible precedent for that hosanna — I dunno!”

“Yes, Colonel, the man with ten talents had a gift — a divine gift,” replied Kilworth, rubbing his hands.

“So he had, Boyce; so he had, but I wasn't thinking of that Bible character when I spoke,” answered Colonel Longford.

“The Bible is full of men of affairs, isn't it?” insisted Kilworth, and, seeing Longford's foot on the stairs, the banker went on: “That's good. Go up and work with him. There were ninety and nine, you know, Colonel!”

A hard glare in the Colonel's eyes prodded Kilworth uneasily, and he asked: "That was what you were going up for, I presume?"

"Well, you presume again, Boyce Kilworth," grunted the Colonel. "What I was going up for, if you must know, was to get the enlargement of your phylacteries out of my eyes and the scent of your anise and cumin out of my whiskers with a round or two of poker and a big snort of whiskey."

In the room above when the Colonel opened the door he observed that business had scarcely begun for the day. A three-handed game of poker was progressing at a corner table; the man at the faro table was toying with the accoutrement, and half a dozen idlers were lounging about the place shuffling cards, clicking chips, or drinking. Perched on a lookout box above the tables sat Caleb Hale with his hat pulled over his eyes. He was whit-tling on his finger nails with a pearl-handled pen-knife, and glooming perceptibly. His eyes turned toward the Colonel — the hulking, shaggy, leonine old figure with rollicking blue eyes dancing in the merry old countenance — and Hale's glance dropped again to his fingers. He did not speak. The Colonel started for the long sideboard, where

the porter in a white apron was presiding, but the old feet seemed to turn abruptly, and the Colonel found himself before the lookout stand holding up a hand to Hale, and heard himself saying, almost as a third person: “ Come out of your cave, Cale. I’m no Pharisee. I don’t care how you make your money, just so you don’t hoard the damn stuff and let it mildew the heart out of you. Let’s have a drink! ”

“ Let’s don’t! ” replied Caleb, not raising his eyes from his hands.

Colonel Longford looked up keenly, but could not meet the gambler’s downcast eyes.

“ Why? What’s eating on you, Cale? ” asked the Colonel.

“ What’s it to you? ” snarled Hale. The Colonel put out his hand, touched the younger man’s knee gently, looked a moment up into the distraught face in silence, and turned away, saying softly: “ I’m sorry, Cale — only don’t think I’m a Pharisee,” and walked to the sideboard.

As he was reaching for a decanter a hand gripped his arm, and Hale whirled the old man about and walked him across the hall.

“ Come into my room a minute,” said Caleb,

and the two entered a dark little cubby-hole, half bedroom and half office. Hale raised a window shade and locked the door. Then he stood staring for a few seconds at the Colonel in woe and despair, before he threw up his hands and cried:

"God — God! Oh, God damn my soul! Look at me — a cheating, thieving, tin-horn gambler! Me! Me, who had a mind once!"

The Colonel started to put a soothing arm about the lithe little figure, but Hale shuddered away.

"Here in the husks — here among swine! Here lower even than Boyce Kilworth; a sneak, a bloodsucker. Oh, God — God! Maybe there is no God to damn my soul — that's the hell of it all! Maybe there is no God!"

He fell across the bed in a tremble. The Colonel bent gently over the man, found a chair, and took Caleb's hand. The thin, white wiry fingers lay a moment in the big, burly hand of the elder man, then another big hand closed over the small hand, and the Colonel began patting and stroking it gently, saying no word. A deep tremor shook Caleb Hale; and then he wept and wept and wept.

Finally the Colonel was startled by the muffled voice of his friend stammering:

"Could you — do you suppose — did you ever — Oh, Colonel — Colonel! For God's sake pray — pray for me!"

The elder man's face turned blank. Quickly his mind snapped back to the battle field of Shiloh and the dusk where he stood beside a long black trench in the morass. Even the chaplain had gone down that day. The Colonel took off his hat there in the dirty, sour-smelling room and lifted up his face and whispered, as his memory prompted through the years: "Oh, Lord, for this our fallen comrade we pray thy mercy and grace. Amen!" And a tear-stained, wrenched old countenance dropped on his chest as the Colonel sat down.

"Damn it all, Cale," he whimpered; "I've got no right to pray for you or any one! But —" Here he punctuated his words with a sob. "Boy — boy — boy —" he cried shrilly; "I'm right here to knock hell out of the first man who tries to preach to you or lead you astray."

The younger man nodded. He was afraid to try his voice. Finally he rose and sat mutely on

the side of the bed, looking at the floor in a kind of meditative trance, very still, while his life stretched ahead of him in prophetic review. He started to speak once, but did not. The Colonel's eyes were closed, and his molten heart was cooling. Hale walked to the window and looked into the dirty alley, then came back, touched the square old shoulder lightly, and said:

"Well, Colonel, it's done — the great transaction's done." He smiled down into the big, troubled face and went on: "I'm going to quit!"

The Colonel's face glowed in a warm smile, and Hale cried quickly: "Will you forget this, Colonel? Please forget it!"

Suddenly the old form rose, the old arms went out, and the great hands clasped the small white hands at the younger man's side, and the bull voice of the Colonel roared:

"No, no, no! By the Eternal, I'll not forget it — not till the Lord swaps my memory for the peace that passeth understanding."

Thus with clasped hands, the two men stood by the window looking into the alley, and from the filth below rose a pathway to the stars for both their eyes.

The next day, when the story of the closing of Caleb Hale's gambling room was in many mouths — Caleb Hale shook the dust of the town from his feet. Every association of New Raynham sickened him. He hungered for a new environment, and partly following the gambler's superstition that luck lay in the mine, and partly because the mine was the only thing on earth he could call his own with even tolerable honesty, he turned blindly to Cripple Creek. Now, Cripple Creek a generation ago was the capital of the wildest mining district in the world. From all over the earth men were hurrying there with golden dreams — dreams of cheating Providence by obtaining through sheer luck that empty mastery over men and events and destiny that money seems to bestow. So Cripple Creek, where ten thousand men were assembling with no thought but each for himself, was as near the depths of the lowest hell as a place often gets in this world. Into this maelstrom of ravenous selfishness — cruel as war and merciless as avarice — came Caleb Hale, with a deed to a prospect hole that punctured a slice of a golden mountain. And no Childe Roland to a darker tower ever came. At first the very gross-

ness of the gambling protected Hale. He knew it was gambling. Every transaction of the day about him he knew was a bet, and he avoided it. By way of penance he took two men out on to his mountain, tried building a cabin where they might work with him, and thought in some vague impractical way that he would be a pick-and-shovel miner. But he found that he was not bred for the job, and while his cabin was slowly going up the thousands of gopher holes pocking the mountain-sides were coming closer and closer to him, and the proved area of paying ore was edging week by week nearer to Hale's claim. One day a great seam of gold almost lewd in its richness was uncovered, directly across the gulch from Hale's cabin. That night the whole district got blind-drunk — some with whiskey, some with gold, and some with the heat of the game — and they offered Hale fifty thousand dollars for his claim. But the lithe, steely-eyed little man in gray tweed, with his white hat, shading a hard face, wrinkling even in its thirties, shook his head, trudged over to his cabin, and went to bed.

"It was not," he wrote to the Colonel that night by his kerosene lamp, "because I think I can get

more — I know it's not worth that — but I know Caleb Hale. If he had that much money in cash, all the devils from the pit would be pulling him into this fiendish game. I invested some money here six months ago, in a few little houses in the residence part of town — in what seemed to be a legitimate investment — and now they have doubled and trebled in value, and as rents have mounted I am having other little houses crowded into the vacant spaces between the first houses. I've got to a point now where I can walk through the Board of Trade and the poker rooms without having to grab my pockets and run. But that's because my stake is small; I know my size — fifty thousand would get me.”

Three months later when the great shaft house had risen across the gulch and the Golden Circle was shipping ore, men knew that the flint-visaged little man whom Cripple Creek tradition had marked as the gambler of New Raynham had refused in the calm course of things first one hundred thousand and then one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for his claim.

New Raynham knew it too. Charley Herrington had come out to Cripple Creek in his

private car expressly to advise Caleb to sell the claim — and lend Herrington the money. Boyce Kilworth had written Hale a long, friendly, congratulatory letter, suggesting that he was now on the road to success, and filing many a wise saw that grated on Caleb's mental ears. But Caleb Hale collected his rents and sent home an allowance to Vashti, his wife, and to little Dick. For a long line of New England Hales told him that Cripple Creek was no place for a mother and child. Shafts went down, shaft houses rose, great dumps were spewed out on the hill near him. On his side of the gulch long wagon trains of ore filed across his claim, and still he lived in his cabin, looked after his little property, and rather enjoyed being regarded as a madman in the bedlam about him. Special writers, "doing Cripple Creek" for the Eastern press, wrote pieces about Caleb Hale — "The madman of Gold Gulch," one writer called him — and Vashti brought these papers containing the articles about Caleb to the *Globe* office. The articles were reprinted, and New Raynham, hearing that Caleb Hale had refused two hundred thousand in cash for his claim, gasped and began to consider the

propriety of calling on Mrs. Hale. Mrs. Kilworth, divinely sent of Boyce did call on her step-sister-in-law, and certain other angels of social mercy, also providentially sent from the Kilworth bank, darkened the doorway of the Hale home. And Mrs. Hale, dressed like Constitution Street during a fair, in the course of her regular afternoon parades,—always made it a point to call at the *Globe* office to get these visits into the society columns. Incidentally she spent a few blithe moments of her call chinning the men in the printing office.

And then one fair day in spring came a telegram from Denver to the *Globe* announcing that Caleb Hale, known as the madman of Gold Gulch, had at last sold his famous claim, The Son of a Gamboleer, to the Stratton interests for a quarter of a million dollars. The telegram made a tremendous sensation in New Raynham, and the Hale myth, gilded by time and diamond-cruised with Hale virtues, was revived in the town.

In the meantime Boyce Kilworth had plodded into his late forties thinking, aspiring, living in terms of money. And because he had squeezed all the nobility of life into a minute seven-per-cent.

schedule, he had gradually become used — calloused maybe — to a habit of clipping off any annoying moralities that stuck out and spoiled the symmetry of his little edifice. So in secret his scissors were busy — busier than even he realised. He had kept a double ledger account with God, entering nothing but cash on either side. There were times when Kilworth could not help feeling that his account was in the red; that he must pay more money to God in the way of church donations, public benevolences, and other cash items. But God had not seemed to require interest on the overdraft, and often Kilworth at the end of a year had balanced the books by visioning under the credit column "to net loss" and at the foot of the debit column "to net profit," and let it go at that. He had grown into a portly, sleek-jowled man, with a face entirely unwrinkled except by fat; a man of Eminent Respectability. Gray hair covered his large head, and he had reduced his gray-ing beard to a moustache which still retained its black. He was amiable to the point of geniality, and his stock of jokes was so well known in the bank and at the sheet-metal mill — the mill that had grown from shed to shed until it had become

almost a “ plant ”— and at the church board meetings, and also at the Associated Charities Board, the Commercial Club, and the county central committee of his party, that his associates could list the whole jokelogue from memory. They were mostly money stories, about the blundering Irishman, and the sharp Jew, and these stories were highly proper, if not very funny. But they were standard stock and every one knew when and where to laugh at them.

He built up in his heart an image of himself as a burden bearer, and liked to condone with himself about the crushing weight of other people's burdens that bent his shoulders. Occasionally his self-pity found its way into his talks, short, non-committal, reticent utterances — dull and colourless, that could hardly be called conversations; but burden bearing was one of his favourite themes in these laconic utterances. He bore Congressman Ladgett's burdens and that worthy soul never had to decide how to cast a vote. Boyce Kilworth, consulting with an office in New York on Lower Broadway, always told Judge Ladgett how to vote. The banker bore Toney Delaney's burdens so that in a convention, Tony never had to

worry about what issues he should support, nor what candidates he should favour; he got these things on a slip of paper from the back room of the bank, just before the convention assembled, and all he had to do was to round up the delegations and carry out the programme. At the sheet-metal mill it was the same; Boyce Kilworth knew the market. He sold the output, paid the pay-roll, bore the burden and took the profits. And all his burden bearing in one way or another seemed to bring him back about seven per cent.

"The chief," ventured Toney Delaney one day, in an outburst of confidence to Colonel Longford, "has things coming his way pretty fast these days. Do you know," and here the Irishman lowered his voice and looked about him for eavesdroppers, "he showed me his little brown book yesterday, and he's got a cool hundred thousand dollars tucked away for each of his girls — their hope box, he calls it!"

"And what else?" asked the Colonel.

"Mother of Moses, man — isn't that enough?" returned Delaney.

"I suppose so —" repeated the Colonel meditatively and added: "What with Boyce's low

morals and their mother's kind of brains, God would just about be showin' his contempt for them by givin' them all that money! Poor gels — poor, poor gels! ” he sighed and changed the subject.

That same night the Colonel tilted a chair on the sidewalk to the brick wall of the *Globe* office for a session with Archimedes whose hands, in the cool of the June evening were resting from the lever that moves the world. The crass reliance of Boyce Kilworth upon money to make happiness was big in the old man's mind, and he opened the session by blurting out: “ Tyn' fightin' cats' tails over the clothes line, makin' a fellow live with the hussy he's been philanderin' with, and givin' a man all the money he's sold his soul to the devil for — how the blessed Lord does get even with them who try to fool Him! ” At the astonished look of the editor the Colonel explained: “ 'Tis a Chinese proverb from the Talmud or the Koran, I misremember which; but it's the milk of the word, son! ”

A month had passed since the sensation of Caleb Hale's good fortune had stirred the town, and naturally the talk of the Colonel and the editor

turned to the prospective return of Hale. At the end of an hour the Colonel was nodding a troubled head and saying: "So he takes her out buggy ridin' on the dark nights, eh? And sends her theatre passes, and slips around to see her of an evenin'?" The editor indicated his assent. "And he's too good a foreman to fire?" The old man paused and looked at the rising moon, and sighed as he went on: "Well, I don't know. I've a letter from Caleb sayin' he would be here soon, but that may mean a day or a week or a month. But when he does come he may do you the kindness of solvin' your problem by killin' your foreman by way of poetic justice. He's a man of nice tastes — is Caleb."

The Colonel sat for a time drumming on the chair between his bony legs while he considered many things, and then sighed a dreary sigh and spoke: "Poor — poor Vashti. I've know the philanderin' lot of Sellarses for three generations back — a pack o' set is the whole kit and bilin'. Poor Vashti — vain as a weathercock, common as kraut, and weak as dishwater by the blood that is in her; addle-pated, and noisy as a load of coal goin' down a chute! It will take more than all

Caleb's money to make folks out of her." He mellowed and smiled in a pause, then took up his monologue: "Ye can read her and all the likes of her as an open book. She's the kind that believes all she needs to move in high society is to know how to make a boiled salad dressing and veal loaf. Poor, poor Vashti! But," he aroused himself and said, "this won't do. We must take this up in the lodge. How old will Vashti be by now, Archimedes? Only twenty-eight or so? Man," cried the old Colonel, earnestly, "Man, if I was the Providence Boyce Kilworth is, which Heaven forbid, I'd make a general order in Heaven, for the angels never to set down anything against anyone under thirty." After pondering a moment over his hypothetical ukase he amended it, "and over fifty; we have only twenty responsible years — and I'm not quite sure of them!"

It was late when the Colonel ambled into the street and started homeward. He deliberately missed the first car that passed him, and when the east-bound train was whistling in the yards, he strolled aimlessly down to the station, two blocks out of his way, to stretch his legs, and to see what

he might see. And there, dropping off the rear Pullman, before the porter had put down his box, was Caleb Hale, natty, dapper — but as worn and lined as a man of forty dare be. When the two men had found a carriage, and the Colonel had made the driver turn the top down so that they could enjoy the moonlight and the Colonel could show Hale how the town had grown, they got in and for the fourth time the old man exclaimed: "Well, well, well — and it's you!" Then he turned to Hale and quizzed: "And why did you come home? — does the family know you're comin' to-night — on this train?"

"No," answered Hale, "this train is a surprise; they know I'm coming to-day or to-morrow. And, Colonel," Hale went on, putting a hand on the elder man's bony knee, "I'm coming home because the game has got too strong. It passed my limit. Oh, I've been fighting, Colonel — fighting for all these long months — watching the price of that mine rise and rise; and every time the price jumped I caught myself wanting to take the price — and sit in the game. But —" he laughed self-deprecatingly, "I said: 'Steady — boy — you've beaten it this far, stay with it,' and I did.

Finally I felt strong enough to sell. So I sold, and — it was too much for me — this last month since the sale, and I had to come!

"Had to come?" echoed the Colonel. "Why, Cale, you don't mean —"

Then Hale broke out: "I tell you, Colonel, a place — where money — raw, stinking, wet, green, uncured money is god, comes nearer to hell than any other place on this planet."

"Women, Caleb?" asked the old man softly.

Caleb Hale smiled a curious reflective smile and shook his head: "No, Colonel — the woman proposition doesn't get me now. I've played that hand out! Seven or eight years ago the women might have got me — along with the rest." He stopped and lifted his face to the Colonel and said gently: "But there's my Dick — my little boy — Nope, Colonel — it wasn't the woman proposition." He broke out suddenly: "It was the money; the devil — my own personal devil — the old one, who came up holding out the old lure to bet, to speculate — to play the big mining game. And he sugar-coated it, slimed it all over with respectability — tempted me to be big-rich — to Be Somebody. And I actually got to thinking

how fine it would be to come home with more money than Boyce — to be more respectable than Boyce — and then I came to myself — and ran — ran like Joseph from Mrs. Potiphar — and here I am! ”

“ But your money, Cale? ” inquired the Colonel cautiously. “ What are you going to do with — ”

“ I’ve already done with it,” cut in Hale. And to the elder man’s blank look Hale replied: “ I’ve put it where it will do the most good! ”

The Colonel nodded unsatisfied, and Hale repeated, stubbornly, as one who had decided upon a formula: “ I tell you I’ve done with it. I’ve put it where it will do the most good.”

The Colonel saw that Hale had closed the door into that inquiry, and the two rode in an embarrassed silence for a moment, then Hale went on: “ You go tell Brother Boyce, what I’ve told you, and get it to Charley Herrington; they’ve both wired me and written to me — and I’m on to both of ’em. I’ve put that money where it will do the most good, and I’m going to rent a little piece of a store and open a cigar stand, and buy a place and have a garden.”

"But — Cale —" remonstrated the astounded Colonel, "the town's prepared to make a millionaire out of you — you can't do any such thing as that — why —"

"Nevertheless, Colonel — that's my game."

"Why, Cale, the town will laugh — you'd be a byword and a joke for —"

"Well — let 'em laugh, and be damned to 'em. It's my business how I make my living — if it's honest!"

As they rode past the gorgeous peaked and towered mansion of the Kilworths, Caleb Hale asked: "How is Brother Boyce coming on?"

"Just now," answered the Colonel, "your distinguished step-brother is making a mint of money out of his new tin-mill, and putting it right back in improvements and additions. But it's a gold mine. Boyce has the golden touch," the Colonel continued. "He has the leprosy of easy success!" The real scrap heap of life, Cale, is made up of those fragile souls, whom the Lord throws out because they will not stand the thundering blows of fate, that are needed to make a real soul!"

"So that's your theory of life?" asked Hale. "Thundering blows?"

And the Colonel looked at the warped, wrinkled face beside him, all eager and cheerful in the moonlight, and thought of what a blow might be hanging over the younger head. But the elder man smiled and said: "This is no time for philosophy, Horatio." Hale leaned forward to catch the first glimpse of his home. Lights in the upper part of the house relieved the tension of the Colonel's nerves and he bade Hale farewell and good luck and went sailing down the street with his arms stretched out on both sides of the deep upholstered carriage seat, and with his feet serenely on the cushions before him, while he belted an ancient love song — like an old dog to the old moon, as he rolled down the street.

The commotion at the curb, the Colonel's roaring farewell, and the driver's word to the horses shot it suddenly into the wife's consciousness that her husband had returned. At the front door he found her waiting for him. He stepped toward her eagerly but she stood trembling and shuddering in the doorway. Then she spoke as one in fear:

"Caleb — don't — don't come in — don't come until I've told you!"

“Why, Vashti — mamma —” he cried and looked keenly into her pale twitching face under the hall gas: “What — what,” and with a shrill, hard cry of understanding he almost screamed — “WHAT!”

“Not until I’ve told you something, Cale — then maybe you’ll not want —” She spoke slowly as one reciting a speech learned by rote.

They gazed into each other’s eyes unsteadily for a moment, then the woman groaned and slumped and turned away in shame. She did not go up the stairs before her, but went into a darkened front room and the man staring at the vacant door a minute groped to the steps behind him and crumpled down.

Caleb Hale sat looking blankly at the walk before him, as a man swaying under a burden. From time to time as the hours passed he shifted his position, rising to a chair beside him, leaning against the porch post, sensible of the perfume of the flowers near his face; pacing the short porch floor, again sitting on the top step above the walk, always with bowed head, save when once or twice he lifted his face in agony to the stars.

The night was wan and old, and the sparrows

in the eaves were beginning to stir, when Caleb, sitting on the steps with his head buried in his hands, cried softly: "Vashti — come here —" He heard her rise in the dark room behind him, and in an instant she stood above him. He did not speak but slowly put up a hand, which she took; he rose and faced her as he kissed the hand that held his and whispered: "Mamma — mamma — mamma — will you forgive me — too!"

PART II

And then for twenty-five years the winds of time and chance blew over the world. "I have seen," saith the preacher, "that time and chance come to every man." Now in life are two forces that fashion it: the inner force, the spiritual bent and inclination of the soul; the outer force of time and chance. So the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. But these rewards and counters of life — the race and the battle — are only the rewards and counters of exterior life — events, circumstances, material things. Within where the soul

lies, where the heart reaps its harvest, there the race is to the swift, the battle is to the strong; and time and chance — the one tragically inevitable, the other shifting — pass with the fleeting days and temper the soul they beat upon until it shows forth its mettle and thus finds its just and inexorable destiny.

For twenty-five years these winds of fate — time and chance — blew across the life of Boyce Kilworth. They galvanized him with metallic success.

As the years piled upon him, Boyce Kilworth found fewer and fewer men to whom he cared to talk, and no women. At home he discoursed largely in ukases, and at the bank and at the tin mill he gave orders. The tin mills had spread over the acreage called Boyceville like a great, brown cancer on the hillside. A little town gathered around the mills — a model town, of course; a town with proper houses set at proper distances apart, with proper flowers growing in proper places, and proper people living in the model houses — a town wherein the plumbing and the marriage licenses in the proper homes were scrutinised with equal rigour! And over it all beamed

the grace and beneficence of seven per cent. net on the investment!

But at the bank, there his heart was! There during most of the day, in the holy of holies behind his roll-topped desk, he sat sphinx-like, and grim! And there the whole community bowed, whether they accepted his general providential suzerainty or not, bowed a willing neck to his heel in financial matters. Men who jeered at his highly moral feudalism, gave their money to Kilworth for investment without question — and received their seven per cent. regularly. Scores of business men all but trusted their property to Kilworth, and in the savings department of his bank hundreds of accounts were made by men and women who left their money personally with Boyce Kilworth, taking no receipt, trusting solely to his integrity. He had notes of merchants, real estate dealers and stockmen issued in blank to cover their over-drafts or for his own accommodation. The Kilworth bank was a one-man bank; it had officers and directors, of course, but they were rubber stamp replicas of Boyce Kilworth. The Kilworth tin mills were one-man mills; the officers and directors were busy approving the plans of Boyce

Kilworth. The Boyce Investment Company was a one-man real estate concern; its officers and directors were consecrated to the high task of bringing the fulness of the earth to Boyce Kilworth. The church where he worshipped was a one-man church, where a preacher and the elders were devoutly bowed to the task of kowtowing to Boyce Kilworth and enjoying him forever. So naturally his God was a one-man God whose enterprises in the universe were expected to bend to the prayers of Boyce Kilworth. “Heaven,” so jibed Caleb Hale, “for Boyce, is organised much like the bank, where there is a properly gray-haired, properly dignified, properly pliable cashier nominally in charge, but who wouldn’t save a soul without consulting Boyce Kilworth, any more than old Grubb at the bank would discount a twenty-five-dollar note without consulting the head of the institution. Though I do believe that Boyce encourages the Lord’s work among the heathen, much as he blesses Grubb in his golf, because missionaries and golf are both well esteemed in high financial circles.”

Through the years that stretched half a century back, Boyce Kilworth had learned the habit of

keeping his business in his head; sometimes in his wisdom he found it best not to deposit at once in its proper account a sum intrusted to him. During the panic of '93 he had learned that bank examiners could be fooled — when the inexorable need of financial salvation demanded that they be fooled. So as he blew the glorious bubble of his seven per cent. beneficence, he raised from an exact science to a fine art the rather common and sordid business of robbing Peter to pay Paul. And as the Kilworth interests broadened, a score of small companies — holding companies, sales agencies, purchasing agencies, and their imitation corporations bearing almost similar names, grew up about the bank, and only Boyce Kilworth knew exactly which company was solvent, and which was a paper travesty of its respectable companion. More and more he kept his own counsel; more and more he grew owlsh and more and more he was busy with his own affairs and had no time to talk. For he knew that a miscalculation, a moment's inadvertence, an hour's relaxation, would shatter a financial edifice which he regarded as a special dispensation of Providence in his favour. His faith in God was founded upon the miraculous preserv-

ance of the Traders' National Bank. He knew how great the miracle was, and paid his tithe, and did his stint of religious observance, and walked uprightly before men. And they said behold the substantial man, without fads or follies, without sentiment or foibles; him we may tie to! Thus he waxed fat in riches and in power as the winds of time and chance blew over his life. But the house of Kilworth was built upon sand — stage morals and stage money. He was a man in his seventies who looked sixty — smooth of skin, with a shaven face, white of hair, steady of nerve, slow of brain, and so hard of heart and dead there that his crafty kindness, all prepense and put out at interest, fooled many men and most of all Boyce Kilworth. But it did not fool his sons-in-law; they knew him — all three of them — the sap-head, Hardy, dubbed by Colonel Longford, the Light of the Harem of the Country Club; the scoundrel, Griffin, who lived in the great city and sometimes forged a check which Kilworth had to cash, and Thompson, the plodder in the bank, who for five long years had never been able to get a balance any day on any book over which he toiled and smudged and moiled. They all knew that

Boyce Kilworth's heart was dead in him. And so did his youngest daughter, Deborah, twenty-six years old and still away from home at school — with a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, a doctor's degree, and taking music and domestic science — "anything on earth," quoth Elsie Barnes at the society editor's desk at the *Globe* office, "to keep her out of that whited sepulchre that the Kilworths call home. And her father down there at the bank, working his head off for his sons-in-law who are mad because he doesn't die and let them have it, and gnawing his heart out because the one daughter he has won't live with him and insists on spending a lot of money that he can't see seven per cent. in. Say, Charley," added Elsie, who was talking to the advertising solicitor as she dashed a straggling, dirty, brown lock of hair from her eyes, and whirled around to her typewriter, "ain't it grand to be rich!"

As the prevailing winds in a burned forest cut away the char and ashes, baring the beautiful grain from the heart of the wood, so the winds of time and chance, keen, merciless, constant, broke into a thousand wrinkles the glad countenance that shone from the heart of Caleb Hale. Broken and

battered his face was, yet his eyes shone out from his seared countenance with an inner light that was strong and kind. He was a man about whom myths and legends gathered. For, to begin with, there was the story of his early career as the town gambler, with its sure basis of romantic facts to build on. And there was the legend of the lost fortune and the horse-laugh that went up in the town when Caleb Hale came home and opened his cigar stand, and offered no explanation for his lowly estate. So myth said he had gambled it away in a night or that he had invested it in wild-cat mining stock. But the prevailing tradition declared that the whole story of the sale was an invention of Vashti's to get into society. His cigar store failed. And coached by Colonel Longford, and without taking thought of Vashti, Caleb Hale opened a little restaurant, where he expected to serve rare, thick beefsteaks; mysterious omelets, and sea-foods, rich and strange. But there Vashti rose with the strength of a giantess, and appalled the Colonel with her force. For she was grounded in a deep and abiding faith that beefsteaks should be pounded before cooking; she would brook no lettuce unless served with vinegar

and sugar and her idea of an omelet was scrambled eggs with minced ham. She overbore by sheer lung strength the two men who had dreamed such high dreams of commercialised art in cookery. So the restaurant closed, and that vision faded unrealised. It was after the restaurant closed that Caleb started a greenhouse on the lot he bought the week after he returned from Cripple Creek, and later he opened a flower store in the frayed end of Constitution Street. And there he stuck. A passion for flowers grew big and beautiful in him. And because it is the love of flowers that makes them thrive, slowly his greenhouse began to spread over the lot, to cover part of another lot and then all of it, and little Dick Hale graduated from High School and was able to go to College — to his father's College in Cambridge, and Caleb Hale's pride in the boy was a mania. And when the boy came marching home with his degree, he took that first calm, serene survey of the universe that youth takes, stepping into its place of conquest, and from the vantage of the flower store found little to do. For with some sort of exquisite irony upon Caleb's elaborate public scorn for money, Dick Hale had made his major study

at Harvard "commerce and banking." Grizzled old Colonel Longford, shuffling into the flower shop during the first week of Dick Hale's return to conquer New Raynham, broke in upon a sad, pitiful, little interview between father and son about the limited territory offering itself for conquest along lines of banking and commerce in a flower shop, and the Colonel toddled out on his three legs, with what fire he could blow into his manner, and came rattling into Boyce Kilworth's office and there bulldozed Kilworth into giving Dick Hale a place in the bank.

When Dick Hale came into the bank, eager for work, capable, charged with new ideas, and abounding with the ambition of youth, Kilworth — partly, perhaps, unable to resist the youth, and partly because Kilworth felt the need of the young man — made him an open favourite, loaded him with work and in three years had won him.

And it was then that Deborah Kilworth, A.B., A.M., Ph.D., B.M. and B. of D. S., entered the plot.

Not that she entered the life of Richard Hale with an especially dramatic entrance. They had Dickied and Debbied each other all their lives;

through the grades, and through the high school — three years apart — with no thought of any feeling more tender between the two than a left-over feeling on the boy's part that she was a kinky-haired, dirty-faced kid, and on her part that he was one of the big smarties who be-deviled little girls in the lower classes. Yet Deborah Kilworth, being in doubt, went to an authority, and the authority being in the bank one July afternoon, she went there, drew up a chair in front of Dick Hale's flat-top desk, and began: "Dickie — what about Radcliffe? You're a Harvard man — and it's Barnard or Radcliffe for me next year — I want to do some work in social organisation of the Assyrian cities, and I feel that Harvard has the best courses — though if Pennsylvania was a place for women — but I don't care much for Philadelphia — it's either New York or Boston — so tell me about Radcliffe — what kind is it?"

"Going after Nineveh and Tyre — eh?" he teased, smiling boyishly into her earnest gray eyes. "Say, Debbie — why start so far up the social tree? Have you heard of the perfectly corking course they're giving next year at Johns Hopkins? — something about the beginnings of social in-

stinct as manifest in the gregarious habits of the protozoa, and indicated by and related to the reproduction of their species by sporeformations — great business — better try it. Get down to grass roots!”

The gray eyes met the blue with a hurt expression, and the girl replied: “Oh — Dickie, don’t be a fool. Tell me about Radcliffe —”

The young man grinned into the serious gray eyes, and began: “Well, Deb — it seems to me that for a girl who has taken her A.B. at Kansas University, her Master’s degree at Wellesley, her Doctor’s degree at Wisconsin, her music at Oberlin, and her Domestic Science at Illinois — Radcliffe hasn’t much to show you — except the cloistered life, and the blue-stocking of commerce.”

“That’s what I’ve heard — rather sheltered and exotic?” she questioned.

He nodded and burst out: “Say, Debbie — why don’t you quit all this educational rounding, straighten up, and settle down and —”

She smiled cheerfully at him: “And get father another son-in-law? No, thank you. Not for —”

“Look here, now, Debbie, listen to me! Did

you know that it is the sorrow of your father's life that —"

"Yes, and he's got three other sorrows of his life," she broke in flippantly. "There's little Hardy, and George Griffin, and poor Thompson — three death's heads perching on his bed posts, grinning at him in his sleep, waiting for him to die; and I presume you want me to bring in a fourth —"

They laughed — because youth always laughs when nothing else presents itself, and Dick answered: "Oh, well, Deb — you know I didn't mean that. I meant why not come home and live and —"

"Dick!" she exclaimed, "I have my side too. What if I do come home? What will I come home to?" She paused and smiled and said: "Now, I'm going to feel dreadfully sorry for myself — but if I come home, it's only to hear money — money — money — dinged at me all the time. Do you know," she asked cynically, "that my education to date has cost father \$11,387.64 in principal, and seven per cent. interest on the sum invested if I had not spent it? Do you know that father invests \$9,348.93 every year in benevolences

and that he adds what he spends on us girls at Christmas to make the sum larger and fool the Lord? Did you know that he gave the widow of a man killed in the zinc galvanizing works \$234 yesterday for her husband, and then set it down as charity? Why, Dick — Dick — did you realise that father actually figures that beautiful model village of Boyceville as a seven per cent. investment — just a seven per cent. investment including the overhead charges, as he calls it? Perhaps — I don't know, but perhaps at one time he was moved by the beauty of it — the fine fraternity of it — once — long ago,” she mused with a troubled frown. “ I'm not sure, but now — now he thinks he has figured out a nine per cent. increase in the efficiency of the men by reason of their housing! Think of that, Dick! ” She was gripping the mahogany board before her, and looking steadily at the youth, facing her as she cried: “ That's what I hear — when I hear anything at all out of father, and when he's out of the house I hear Esther, and Mary and Ruth whine and snuffle because ‘papa gives so much away;’ and mamma siding right in with them when they're at home, and right in with father

when the girls are away. Oh, Dickie!" she was speaking quickly and earnestly. "I know that father gives you an impression that I'm a heartless wretch; and not a good daughter — but —"

"No, Deborah," interrupted Hale. His blue eyes had met the burning light in the gray eyes that sought and held his in the girl's emotion, and he was embarrassed. "Only I rather thought —"

"Oh, you rather thought what they all think," she cut in bitterly, "that a girl with a beautiful home, with a devoted father, and a slave of a mother, and three doting sisters, whose psychology tests show that they quit growing mentally at about ten years old, should stay at home and intrigue and mollicoddle father for fifty or a hundred dollars, and hear him translating every fine and beautiful thing on earth into its greatest common denominator in money — money — money — should sit like a tabby cat on the hearth and be happy. But I can't, Dick Hale — I can't and I won't!"

The girl was leaning across the desk. The young man had risen and pushed the door shut lest the janitor, sweeping in the deserted counting room in front, might hear her rising voice. He stood over her, looking at the strong, capable

hands clasped convulsively on the table, and his eyes rose gently to her eyes that were looking, first down, then up at him in a misery that touched a new spring in his heart.

"Dick," she began, "ever since father has been making you his favourite here, I've known what you'd think — and some way I've wanted you to know — to understand — to appreciate — my point of view."

He dropped into a chair at the end of the table near her, tilted it back, rocking on his toes in silence a few seconds, and said, as he looked steadily at her: "Deb — it's — it's tough — tough luck — why, some way I never — I supposed, of course, that —"

"Exactly —" bitterly, "you supposed I just loved the dry nonsense of text-books and the empty pursuit of knowledge — and me an old girl hanging around the colleges like a ghost with the other anæmic old maids, and pie-faced old bachelors who haven't got spunk enough to get out and try real life. Well, I hate it — if you must know." She stopped a moment, then blurted out, blushing up to her curling hair: "Dick Hale — listen! I want just what other women want — a home —

and — and everything! But the everlasting money — money — money — keeps me away from it. The men who'd marry me for my money and make another son-in-law, I wouldn't have, and the men I'd like — they're the kind who are too proud to be sons-in-law —" She threw out her hands hopelessly and cried: "So I'm going to Radcliffe — or Barnard. And because he can't make me helpless — as helpless as mother, and the girls; as helpless as the preachers he always wheedles out of conference, as helpless as the men at the mills and in the bank; as helpless as everything — every one — but you, Dick — that father has around him, and has gangrened with money — you and the whole town think I'm a person —" here she smiled and began to laugh, "without proper human emotions."

The laugh saved the scene. They both laughed. And the girl pushed her chair back impulsively and rose, saying: "Now, Dickie, just forget it, and remember women have no souls and that I'm like all the rest."

He stood in the doorway watching her as she turned the corner, and the phrase "the men I'd like" kept coming back to his mind, and he won-

dered what sort of fellows she really would like, and if maybe he was of the sort.

So Dick Hale, with a vision of soft brown hair, curling and blowing about a vivid face, with a vision of exceedingly even teeth, and a good healthy skin — with a vision before his eyes of a woman who seemed for the first time fair to him — went back to his work. And his work was the rather delicate business of putting the bank in order for the visit of an examiner the next day — a task which in three years had been transferred by Kilworth largely to the younger man. Kilworth, as had become his custom when an examination was imminent, before leaving the bank that night, had laid out a number of things for Dick to do. Certain emergency matters, overdrafts and cash items had to be lifted out and scattered among the notes, using the accommodation paper that Kilworth's friends had left in blank for him to use at will. Also there was a note of Colonel Longford's to be signed — as the Colonel desired a renewal and had written to Kilworth from Wagon Wheel Gap, Colorado, to extend the old note. But the old note was in a bank in Vermont, so Hale had been told to make out a new note with

a signature as nearly like the Colonel's as he could. He often did these things for Kilworth. They were not included in the theory of banking and commerce as Dick had learned it at Harvard. But in the practical conduct of a bank his teachers had told him that he would find certain varying practices, and he had found them. They constituted Mr. Kilworth's way, and that was enough for Dick Hale. He knew, for instance, without having been told by Kilworth or by the others in the bank, that the Kilworth corporations were large borrowers from the bank, and he vaguely suspected that these loans represented Kilworth's liabilities; but he reasoned that if the federal banking laws hampered a man so entirely able to pay as Boyce Kilworth was able to pay, from borrowing from the bank, then naturally good banking would compel the bank to adopt the very subterfuges to conceal the transactions which the bank used. So there was the paper of the Boyce Investment Company, and of the various subsidiary corporations organised by Mr. Kilworth to conduct the sheet metal works. But their notes and obligations had to be cleared out of the way before the examiners arrived, and other paper put in the note drawer.

Dick himself had borrowed five thousand dollars from a bank in Utica, New York, with Boyce Kilworth's endorsement upon the note and had bought some stock in the Corrugated Metal Manufacturing Company for a song, at Mr. Kilworth's suggestion, and he had smiled when he saw his rating one day in a commercial report as good for \$50,000. After that rating appeared Dick often gave Mr. Kilworth his note for rather large amounts to use with Kilworth's endorsement in the East. But the bank was paying eight per cent. semi-annual dividends and its stock was selling at one hundred and fifty per cent. premium; so Dick Hale bent over his task of fixing up the cash items for the examiners and damned the banking laws in general, and the rules in particular that were making him work overtime. Also, he resolved that he would never be a son-in-law. But he felt that if the man who had offered him ten thousand for his Corrugated Metal stock was in earnest, and would bring in the money to-morrow, Dick Hale knew a place — a snap in fact — where he could invest that ten thousand and turn it ten times over in two years. And he dreamed of a day, within the reasonably near future, when Boyce Kilworth might

be a mere father-in-law. So he got out a striking imitation of Colonel Longford's note, put a few papers among the morning's collections that looked plausible, as per directions of Kilworth, slipped something like a hundred thousand dollars' worth of accommodation paper into the note drawer and whistling the "Beautiful Lady" between his teeth at half-past six, squinted over a tentative statement of the bank's three-million-dollar business for Mr. Kilworth's guidance the next day that looked like an oil painting of prosperity. He called up the Kilworth home to ask Mr. Kilworth if he desired to see the statement that night, and when Deborah came to the telephone, he played with her for two minutes or so before letting her put her father on the line. That night after dinner in the curious little cubby-hole filled with expensive unread books in glittering sets, that Kilworth called the library, Dick and Boyce Kilworth went over the statement carefully, after their custom, line upon line. At ten o'clock the banker threw his hand down on his desk to indicate that he was satisfied, and called to his daughter, reading in the living room, to see that Dick got safely out, while Boyce Kilworth reached for his Bible

to read his evening chapter about the Lord's extreme solicitude for them he has chosen to honour. On the wide veranda — twelve feet deep with its massive pillars and heavy limestone railings, the youth and the maiden loitered for a moment, and the girl asked sharply:

“Dickie — what are you and father up to — about that examiner?”

“Bookkeeping,” smiled the youth.

“Bookkeeping?” But he saw her serious eyes in the twilight and answered her frankly:

“There's no reason why you shouldn't know. It's this: Good banking and the banking laws sometimes don't jibe. We keep our books one way in order to get results and we have to keep our books another way to satisfy the examiner who isn't interested in results, but is bound by rules; that is all there is in it. We had a tip from Atchison that an examiner was coming down the line to-morrow and we're getting ready for him.”

“And father is worried, Dick — I know father.”

Their eyes met for a frank second, and Dick smiled and shook his head: “Not a thing in the

world in it, Debbie; he's just seventy-four years old and — seventy-four years timid — that's all."

The girl put her hand out, but withdrew it, before it touched him, and then she cried: "Father may be everything else under the shining sun, Dick Hale — but he never was and never will be timid."

He manœuvred himself into a position near her, where their arms touched. She did not shrink away. And they were silent a moment, looking out into the lawn below them. The man whistled softly a bar from some street tune, and said gently without turning to look at her: "Nothing to it, Sis — nothing but the baseless fabric of a dream, Debbie." He turned to her, reached out his hand, took hers, shook it in bashful quickness, and skipped down the broad stone steps, calling mockingly: "Sleep, my pretty one, sleep — thy father is watching his sheep!"

Richard Hale walked home slowly through that July night. His mind was busy with new trains of thought. For the first time he had a curious uneasy feeling about Boyce Kilworth. All that his daughter had said that day about him, her warning that evening, had unsettled the young man. And he recognised as he ran down his emo-

tions to their source that it was not what had been said — but the author of what had been said that disturbed him. The hair and the eyes and the teeth and the voice — all for the first time striking him as beautiful — had impressed him; had caught his attention and held it to what the girl had said. So he ran it over and over in his mind. He knew Boyce Kilworth measured everything by its money value; but, why not? Different men had different standards of value, he reasoned; was not one standard as good as another, and were not men of differing standards equally good men? A banker dealt with money; why not value things by the measure he understood? But in his heart some way — perhaps it was the argument of the hair and eyes and teeth and voice — Richard Hale knew that his logic was lame. And the last thing he heard at night as he turned to sleep was a voice crying: “ Why, Dick — he even turns into seven per cent. interest that beautiful model village he has made of Boyceville! ”

In the night he woke up wondering why the year before Boyce Kilworth had trusteeed in four separate trusts two hundred thousand dollars each for his daughters, and taken the account and the

trusts to New York. He had not questioned it before. But again the voice and the eyes and the beauty of a girl's presence newly discovered, made the query in his heart persist. He woke in the morning keen to have the buyer for his Corrugated metal stock materialise and anxious to make the larger plunge that would bring him the greater return — but again the voice cried: "The men I'd like," and he asked if she would like a fellow whose morning thoughts were of money. As he dressed he heard his father whistling softly outside where Dick knew the elder man was pottering around among his garden flowers — probably among his delphiniums and bees — playing the old game of plant breeding. When he went out Dick found his father standing proudly before the giant stalk of blue that was known of men as the Hale Delphinium. A great splash of rich colour was smeared across the length of the garden and Caleb Hale, with his shirt sleeves rolled above his elbows, was poking the earth in the bed, or the next moment standing arms akimbo, head on one side, squinting at the glory of the proud upstanding gorgeous blossoms. The father turned at the son's approach and cried: "By —

johnnie — boy — aren't they splendid? And to think that all over this world, Dick — everywhere — even down in Australia and in South America, Hale's Delphiniums are splotching blue in gardens and parks and flowerbeds; and all because I took to playing with the bees a dozen years ago, to make a flower that would stand our dry, hot summers. Why, Dick, they're as hardy as their granddaddies, the larkspur — and never will run out; long after I'm gone these things will be gladdening the eyes of the world. That's something — eh, Dick! ”

The battered, broken old face lighted up in a cracked smile of joy, and the son asked: “ But have they made you anything, pater — what has Hale's Delphinium netted you? ”

The father's voice broke into a chuckling laugh as he answered: “ Why — what do I know? You see, Dick, we busted our adding machine and I lost my ready reckoner twenty years ago, and I never installed a cost system.” He cocked a humorous blue eye at his son as he continued: “ I suppose if I counted my time at fifty cents an hour, and the time of the bees at say ten cents an hour, and the interest on the value of the lot

compounded semi-annually, and then stuck in thirty per cent. for overhead charges and marketing — I'd have been in the poorhouse on Hale's Delphinium long ago." He stopped to laugh at his conceit and added seriously: "Here's the way I figure it, Dick — all over the earth people glance at these big, jumping spots of blue flower and a little thrill of joy hits 'em. They don't know why, but I do. It's the come-back of the soul to beauty; the reaction of the infinite on the human heart. Such ineffable beauty no human hand could make; it's a token of something bigger than us, Dick, in the world — God's visiting cards stuck around all over the earth — to let 'em know he's called. And, being Hale's Delphiniums, I'm travelling in fairly good company, boy! That's how I figure it." The old face, wrinkled and twisted with dead emotions, with the once hard lines softened, stared up into his son's face with a glow of pride as he asked: "Ain't that something, Dick — almost as good as Boyce's millions?"

The night thoughts of the son formed on his lips and he asked: "Father, why don't you like Boyce Kilworth? What has he ever done to you?"

The father dropped his arms to his side, and gazed at the ground, as he answered musingly: "Well — I don't seem to cotton to Boyce — do I, Dick?" He paused and added: "I never did." His head drooped reflectively as he droned on: "Always got in my gorge and made me want to heave. So kind of damn smoothly, evenly successful! Dick," he cried, "look at that face — not a wrinkle — not a retraced step shown, not a temptation conquered, not a line from an aching heart." The father lifted his head and cried passionately: "How God must pity — perhaps even scorn — the life that shines through that kind of a face!" The old countenance was turned to the boy's and the father cried: "Oh, Dick — Dick, my boy — never a shame to sting his pride — never a remorse to furrow his heart — never a fall to test his strength — never a failure to harrow his soul! What did God put us here for, son, if not to come out stronger by our weaknesses, braver by our retreats, bigger by wrestling with our meanness, holier by coming into love through hate! Boyce Kilworth's ghastly success has cost him all these things. So some way I don't care for him. I just kind of feel he's missed

the whole meaning of life, and I'm agin him!"

The keen blue eyes searched the young face for a quiver of recognition. The son shook his head, and sighed: "Some way I don't follow you, pater. For the life of me I can't see what Mr. Kilworth has done to —"

"Done? Done? Done — hell, boy — that's just it! He'd be better if he had done, if he would do something miserable. I'm a poor damned sinner, Dick, and I know it — Lord, how I know it! But sin wasn't what I did — so much, as it was what I was! Sin is a symptom of a disease of the soul — and Boyce's trouble is ingrown. The sinner, Dickie, is the cuss who grinds his guts out day by day for material things — for selfish things, for measly finite things, and Boyce's whole life — ugh —" he shuddered, "has been one long chase of dollars for the sake of dollars, dollars for the power of Kilworth, dollars for the glory of Kilworth, dollars to make Kilworth the great tin god of a Providence in the community! And the devil's answer to all his assumption is to set three leering sons-in-law forever before him with their thumbs on their noses, wiggling their fingers at his pride!"

Caleb Hale laughed and sat down on a packing box and chuckled. “ Aye,” another chuckle, “ God will not be mocked — God will not be mocked.” When he had finished laughing he rose and said: “ Come on to breakfast, Dick — and don’t let them fool you into thinking He will be either. Sixty years of bumping the world on the sharp places has taught me that, son — and I give you that and Hale’s Delphinium as your heritage ! The lawyers can’t bust the will and take that from you, my boy ! ”

As he worked that day in the bank, marching and counter-marching through his accounts with the examiner, while Boyce Kilworth sat at his desk making large Os on a paper and watching the contest from the tail of his eyes, Dick Hale forgot the morning’s talk, but in his undersoul, it pricked him like a thorn and made him dimly unhappy. Only in the late afternoon, when the examiner had gone, and Deborah Kilworth came down to the bank in her electric car to take her father home, did the thorn in his conscience ease him. He looked up and saw her wearing a great bunch of Hale’s Delphiniums; so his own heart thrilled at the beauty he could not express, and their eyes

carried to both hearts a wordless message that was deep and sweet.

And all that summer their hearts spoke words that they dared not put upon their lips, and each was shy and fearful lest the other misunderstand what both were feeling. Such is the way with love that sinks deeper than the flesh. For of all the unfathomable, commonplace mysteries that go to make up the unfathomable commonplace mystery of life, none is more baffling than the commonplace mystery of love. How do hearts communicate through the silences? Or, stranger still, how do hearts find through the elaborate and studied silliness of such small talk as convention allows unpledged lovers, the golden wire, laden with things deeply beautiful? Yet if lovers did not speak through the hidden channels to the heart, if only spoken words were left to life and love, what monstrous — indeed, what hideous courage it would take for a lover to seek his first kiss! The truth is that the lips are the laggards of love; they come stuttering along with their empty words long after eyes, and voice, and finger tips — and Heaven only knows what else, for therein lies the mystery — have gone forth seeking

eagerly, and have found the way of the ineffable peace, and have plighted troth over and over again.

So during the summer that followed that meeting in the bank, where first their hearts glowed with a new and holy fire far below their conscious selves, these two, going about their daily round of work and play, were slowly and amid much conscious amazement — after the old commonplace fashion — meeting out in the place of mysteries beyond the senses, and reading line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, the secret meaning of each other's hearts. To transcribe the dialogue of lovers whose lips are sealed, is to set down the emptiest chaff in language. Here they meet at a dinner party, there at tennis, yonder at the bank, and again, on the street. And when they meet they fall to with a will, threshing chaff. Yet in the chaff, apart from the words, hidden in eyes and tones and touch lies the grain that is ripening in their hearts. It is all tearfully funny and comically sad — this mystery of nest-making in the heart.

At the end of the summer of an August evening, just before Deborah Kilworth is to leave for

Radcliffe, they are sitting together in the deep veranda of the Kilworth residence, listening to the screeching night-fiddles of the katydids, and the zylaphones of the crickets, and the interminable crash of small night sounds that affront the ear in those embarrassed silences that come when two hearts are struggling to push back from weak lips the words not ready to be uttered. Finally talk starts up — perhaps it is of books — serious books, very likely, for the poor intellect is miserably floundering to regain its balance; or maybe politics — fancy politics in a love scene, or religion, which is just as grotesque, yet often used to fill the gaps that make the silences that every heart fears and loves in times like this. At the end of one of these joyously painful silences the young man broke out:

“Debbie — I wonder if you’d care to know I’ll make a lot of money — for me — on my Oklahoma oil lands deal?”

There jumped into her consciousness like a trout from a pool the fear that perhaps he fancied money gave him some status with her and she cried:

“Oh — no, I don’t care, Dick — how much you

make or how little. It's not what money you make but what money makes of you, that counts. Take it if it comes — speed it, if it goes — and you're safe."

"I know — I know, Debbie," returned the youth, "only I thought you hated money; so I was afraid —"

"Yes — yes," she answered, "I understand, Dick. Money is nothing, I suppose, one way or another, if you consider it properly; but it is liable to become a cumulative poison in the heart. We — we, we — Dick — we must not measure life by money!" The "we" that she spoke spilled from her lips unconsciously. He caught it up with an eager: "Oh, Debbie — we'll not!" He repeated "We'll not." But the "we" was spilled, the straw from the heart's nest had tumbled into life, and the girl went on bravely:

"Dick — you've been so good to me this summer; you've understood." She stopped and looked into his eyes where words were not needed, then she went on: "Dick, let's you and me promise ourselves we'll be the kind of friends who measure life in joy — in service, in — in —" She was pushing back from her lips the obvious word

and the youth before her glowed happily into her eyes as he laughed: "In — in — oh, Debbie, why not use the short and lovely word?"

She blushed and turned away crying as she pushed his hand back: "Oh, Dickie, don't be a fool! Let's just be friends." And so the old commonplace mystery of love working its miracle in their lives, rose almost to their lips and they parted holding in their memories the glimpse they had of the straw from their hearts' nest that they were building busily in the silences.

And then the autumn, the winter and the spring went by, and as the months sped on they cut care into the young man's face — care that even the letters from Deborah Kilworth could not erase. For slowly he was coming into the knowledge of good and evil in a bank; slowly he was finding the sham and illusion behind Boyce Kilworth's respectability.

The night following the day of Deborah Kilworth's return from Radcliffe, after her ten months' absence, she heard her father call Dick Hale upon the telephone and summon him to the Kilworth house. And later, from a room wherein she sat trying to read, a room near by her father's library, she kept hearing the petulant voice of her

father complaining in short rasping sentences, as the younger man explained something, or expostulated, she was not sure which it was. But it was evident that a bank examiner was in town, on his semi-occasional visit, and that the young man was trying vainly to take a stand against the judgment of the elder.

“But I tell you I’ve always bluffed ’em,” the girl heard her father insist. And again after young Hale had gone over some problem the old banker snapped: “Cheap bank clerks, appointed by cheap congressmen, working for a cheap politician in Washington who is always leggin’ for a big job down in New York — I know ’em.”

The girl tried to read her book and shut out the clamour; and succeeded for a time, but her father’s voice rising in a whine of rage, attracted her with: “I tell you, boy — the only way to win our game is to beat theirs.”

He would not go into the problem, whatever it was that the younger man was presenting. Finally the old man broke out angrily: “Sound banking? Sound banking? I’ve run this bank since seventy-three, and I beat ’em in four panics,

and I tell you — stick to their rules — it's their rules that count — their rules and regulations. I know 'em by heart, and I've never been caught breaking a rule, and they know it. Stick to their rules on the books and fool 'em, and bluff 'em!" Evidently young Hale tried to stop Kilworth for the old man cried: "Ain't it my bank? Ain't it my money? Now, sir — I have told you what to do — go do it!"

Apparently the younger man was picking up his papers for a long silence ensued. Her father, clearly piqued and fretting, mumbled: "I know how to run that bank. My way has been good for forty years, and I don't want you to bring your college fads and isms of sound banking around me." At the door Kilworth threw a growl at Hale: "I know my way, and it's always won. I shan't go trying your goody-goody game with things like they are now!"

In the veranda, where the girl hurried to meet the young man, she saw a worried, tired face. Their hands met and the handclasp lingered as they crossed the veranda. She asked anxiously: "What is it, Dick?" He put her soft, yielding hand to his face and held it there unresisting a mo-

ment, as one applying a healing balm, and answered gently: “I can’t go into it all now, Debbie — but, oh, it is so good — so good to know that you are here — so near — now!” On the front step he paused to look into the beautiful face of the girl gazing at him intently and then Hale exclaimed: “Oh, Deb — Deb — if the pater in there just had the memory of one time, when he had played a different game and won, what a big help it would be to-night.” Then he turned and left her.

It was the summer when the world’s supply of zinc had been poured into the alloy of cannons, and that summer some devilish fate had given Boyce Kilworth a contract at the Corrugated Metal mills for half a million dollars’ worth of zinc tubing, and found him without a pound of zinc on hand, with zinc consorting with the precious metals. Work was dragging at all the other mills in Boyceville and the old banker was walking gingerly and slowly through a labyrinth of chicanery that he had built up day by day and month by month during forty years of banking. And the next morning came the first warning shudder of the coming earthquake which was to wreck the

house of Kilworth. The first tremor startled the bank when Colonel Longford, cheerfully hobbling into the counting room, stood before the note counter and bawled gaily across to the clerk at the note docket: "Hi, there, you Hank Thompson, son-in-law of Cræsus, and keeper of the records and seals — come here." The old voice piped gleefully. "What kind of a insti-damn-tution, are you running here, anyway?" He drew from his pocketbook a slip of paper and waved it at the meek son-in-law who stood wondering what blunder he had made this time: "Sending me a notice of a note due that I paid — God knows how long ago."

The old man rattled his cane on the brass railing at his feet and cried: "Oh, you bankers — I'm glad to get it on you! You're such an exacting set of old maids, that it's worth twenty-five thousand dollars to catch you in an error." Thompson was flapping the leaves of his note docket. A clerk near the note cage had gone in to look over the paper set out for notification. An examiner, working on the cash ledger, dropped his pen and shoved the clerk aside, as the Colonel called to the back room of the bank: "Hi — hi — hi — you,

Boyce — you, Dick — why don't you get some clerks here who can run a bank?" He was laughing. "Boyce — come out here and let's go over to Pete's and get the cigars; it's worth a pocket full to set my old heart jumping as it did when I got this notice. Why, man, I haven't seen twenty-five thousand dollars in twenty-five thousand years."

Hale was in the banking room, trying to get in front of the examiner to reach the bundle of notes in the drawer first. Kilworth, gaping and pale, sat in his room with his hand trembling on his desk.

But the examiner reached the note drawer well ahead of Hale, clicking the cage door lock behind him. A little group of customers drew around the Colonel, smiling in anticipation of the fun. But Dick Hale was not smiling. He was trying to catch the Colonel's laughing eyes. In a minute the examiner had a note out of the bundle, and showing it across the marble counter under the wicket, asked: "What about this, Colonel?"

Colonel Longford eyed the paper. It was a note for \$25,000; it had apparently come into the bank for collection from a New York bank, and

it bore Boyce Kilworth's endorsement across the back. Vainly Dick Hale coughed and tried to divert the old man's attention.

The old eyes scanned the paper closely. Finally the old, piping voice changed its note and roared: "A damned forgery — a damned, scoundrelly forgery — why, Boyce," he cried, "see if they've got your signature; mine's wrong there in the J. I never make a J that way — it looks like that, but I swipe the pen up and this is carefully drawn down, and I never in my life signed it John. I always sign it Jno — you know that!"

The examiner looked at the Colonel, and caught Dick Hale's eyes trying to reach the old man. "Let's go into the back room, gentlemen," said the examiner. As they turned out of the lobby of the bank, the Colonel saw Kilworth's ashen gray face. He looked up and caught Dick Hale's signal. But he met the examiner's eyes at the same instant. Slowly through the old brain a glimpse of the truth made its way. As he walked back to Kilworth's desk he resolved what to do.

He lifted his keen old eyes to the examiner's face, pulled a cigar from a case, snipped the end off as he sank into a deep upholstered chair and

asked: "Boyce — say — that couldn't be that note I asked you to sign for me last winter when I hurt my hand — could it? By George, I believe I haven't paid that note — now, have I? It was for that Santa Fe stock I bought — well, I'm a goat!"

The examiner sniffed. Kilworth saw it. He cleared his throat, paused a moment and said slowly: "Well, now I don't just remember. Ask Mr. Hale."

"We'll trace it back and see," said the examiner, putting the note in a pocketbook before him and rising. And it took him just three days after that to close the bank.

PART III

And in those three days, Boyce Kilworth went through a Gethsemane without faith, into a Golgotha without hope. The examiner was just closing a two days' visit — a visit rather longer than the other banks thought necessary then — at the hour when Colonel Longford disclosed his forged note. When the examiner did not go away after two days in the Kilworth bank, the clerks in the

other banks in the town, and later the directors of the banks and finally their friends, began whispering. The night after the Colonel's explosion in the lobby of the bank, in half a hundred homes, men were looking anxiously for old copies of the *Globe* to read the Kilworth bank's last quarterly statement. Then the lights began to glow on the switchboard in the telephone office in the residence district at an unusual time — between eight and nine. A hundred quiet tips were whispered across the lines, and a hundred others not so quiet followed, and by seven the next morning, the news was running through the model village of Boyceville in anything but an orderly fashion. At eight a small crowd had gathered in front of the bank door with its great bronze columns, and when Boyce Kilworth came down, half an hour late, after a night's tussle with the examiner, he saw the crowd, heard its murmur as he went into the side door of the bank, and there found three examiners waiting for him. By nine o'clock the whole town knew that two extra examiners were in town, and then the crowd before the bronze columns outside blocked the street car traffic. Dick Hale stood at the teller's window, when the examiners could

spare him from the back room, and counted out the cash, slowly and confidently, joking with the people he knew, and keeping a quick ear open for developments behind him. He knew that the three examiners would get no important information out of Grubb, the gray-haired, respectable cashier; for Grubb knew nothing. And mentally, Dick catalogued their pounding upon that worthy, as a bass drum solo. But the young man, who had put in ten hours with the first examiner, knew that he had a turn coming with the two new men, and all the time as he counted cash, he was going over the story he had told, freshening it up, adding details, trying and retrying his stepping stones of fact, across the stream of fiction, to see whether they would hold him.

And all the while Boyce Kilworth, ashen gray and nervous, was sitting at his desk, making line after line of large Os on the paper before him, watching the current of old friends and neighbours as it washed through the lobby of the bank. He was dazed and helpless. He prepared a statement for the afternoon papers, declaring that the run was a piece of madness, asserting that the bank was as sound as the rock of Gibraltar.

By half-past ten, Deborah Kilworth, answering the telephone for her mother, realised that something unusual was happening at the bank. Strange voices kept calling for her mother; sometimes they insulted her, sometimes they wept. Her two sisters who lived in town, came hurrying over, fear-stricken; they, too, had been getting telephone calls. A school teacher whom Deborah knew, called while the girls were talking together, and the teacher, frightened at the possibility of losing her life's savings, begged Deborah to help her. Then the Kilworths knew the truth. The two married daughters, in childish terror, planned to leave town on the noon train, and Mrs. Kilworth advised the girls to go, and then called up the society editor of the *Globe* to tell her that Mrs. Hardy and Mrs. Thompson had left on a shopping tour for Kansas City. By the time Mrs. Kilworth had these things done, her parlour was filled with women — old friends and neighbours, working women, church friends — who, when she met them, began frantic appeals to her to help them to get their savings. And when Deborah, leaving her mother chirping sweetly to the frenzied group,

walked down the front steps of the house, she passed a group of men and women at the gate. In her electric she sped to the bank. There she saw the crowd, half curious, half sullen, and she heard its suppressed growl when she descended from her electric car. She hurried through the back door into the bank and found her father, sitting dumb and stupefied, making aimless marks on the sheet of paper before him. She went to him and asked:

"Father — Father — what does this mean?"

He lifted his smooth, fat, white face to greet her and cried impotently: "Go home — go home — I tell you!"

She looked into the adjoining room, where Hale's desk was empty, then she leaned forward, glanced into the banking room and, not seeing him, asked: "Where's Dick Hale, Father?" A face in the street, idly peering above the sash curtain of the high window beside Kilworth's desk, may have diverted him, for he turned away and did not answer her but, dropping his eyes, began a new line of Os on the paper before him. Deborah heard voices in the back room. She turned to fol-

low the voices, which led her into the room where three men at a table were cross-questioning young Hale.

When she opened the door, the three strangers rose, and she asked: "Will you excuse Mr. Hale for a moment?"

She saw Dick smiling, with his blue eyes glittering and a flushed place on his cheek, and called: "Just a moment, please, Dick." And he followed her into his own office.

"Dick—" she caught his arm, "what is it?"

"It's a fight — Deb," answered the young man, meeting her eyes eagerly, "but we'll win — I think!"

"You think? Don't you know, Dick?" she asked abruptly. Then she added quickly: "Dick — has he," she nodded toward her father's room, "has he led you into any wrong?" The man took her hand, and said in a low voice: "Debbie Kilworth — you must believe what I say." She nodded, and he went on: "Debbie, I've had to do things for him this year that broke the rules of this game as I would have played it; but, oh, Debbie, Debbie, as I —" he checked the sentence,

“ by all that is beautiful between us, Deb, I’ve never touched one penny for myself — not one ! ”

“ And father ? ” she demanded.

Into the silence there in the room, came the even monotony of the crowd’s mumble outside and the ceaseless shuffle of many feet. To the young man it seemed the dull complaint of the dying, and he shuddered inwardly as he thought of the town’s dying faith.

After a moment’s hesitation he spoke :

“ Well — ” he paused, but her eyes called for the truth and he went on : “ He is a heavy borrower — I can’t say just how heavy.” He hesitated again. “ But I feel he is amply able to pay — and more ; only — ”

“ Only what, Dick ? — we must have no reserves now,” the girl persisted.

“ Only it appears — you see he’s always been a borrower from the bank under various — ” he stopped again and added : “ devices.”

“ Devices ? ” asked Deborah. She caught the buzz of the crowd — distant and ominous, though low and well-controlled — a kind of drone ; then she heard Dick saying : “ You know, Debbie, the law doesn’t permit him to borrow money of his

own bank; so he has had to —" He did not finish; the low insistent monody of the crowd distracted him, and the girl returned with a question:

"And did you know it, Dick — all this time?" And the man answered: "Only a guess — an uneasy guess — until the last few months never more than a fear that he smothered as soon as he saw it. But, Deb — it's not his fight now — so much that I'm fighting; it's for all those people out there; it's for the business faith of this town. That's the fight now!"

In the silence they both heard the voice of the distraught soul of the street; Talk — low-keyed, footless talk, not excited, but deadly in its confusion and dangerous in its latent power. Neither of the young people understood it. Yet each felt it, and was ashamed to voice the dread that was in each heart. For a second their hands clasped tightly, then she said: "All right, Dick, that's all I need to know! Good — good friend of mine!" She followed him with worried eyes as he crossed the hall and passed from her sight. When she came into her father's room, he looked up from his desk and cried:

“Go home!” But she put her coat in his closet, and began taking off her gloves. Two men, young working men, had climbed the telegraph pole outside Kilworth’s window, and were pointing at him.

“The girls,” she said, “have gone to Kansas City.” He turned to avoid the intruding gaze of the men on the pole, and started to pull down the shade, but stopped. He did not speak for a moment, then sighed and said:

“Well — it’s just as well!” Into his room came the nerve-wracking hum and rustle of the crowd. The crowd’s voice formed a sort of underconscious stratum of their talk, subtly affecting its character.

“Father,” she asked, sitting beside him, “can’t Joel Ladgett help you with some of his old friends in Washington?”

The staring faces above him seemed to annoy him, and he did not answer. “Well, Father, how about Toney Delaney? — he’s effective. He might —”

The whine of a car on a curve, a policeman’s shout clearing the car track, startled the girl, and her father looked up.

"Joel's tried and tried," the old man retorted wearily. "And Toney's tried and tried, and my New York friends, they've tried and tried!" He sat looking at the symmetrical Os on the paper before him, then broke out: "It used to be that in business, business men had influence; business men could help business men in our government. Business men once were our government." He paused heavily. She touched his arm reassuringly, but it was a mechanical gesture. For her heart was beginning to feel the tragedy gathering outside, in the slow, hopeless death of the town's faith in her father.

He began again: "But that scepter has passed," and repeated the words monotonously; and then continued querulously: "These three harpies here — these examiners — what do they know about business? They're out of sympathy with business men. That scepter has passed!" he cried with a weary finality, dropping his hand upon the mahogany board. They sat listening to the dull murmur of the crowd — a kind of delirious reiteration of one meaningless note, until a clerk from the clearing house came in. From his bundle of checks, he drew one for \$7,000 and

put it on the desk before the banker. The girl saw that it was signed with her father's name, payable to his son-in-law, Griffin. Kilworth picked it up, looked at the signature carefully, and threw it down, shaking his head at the clerk.

"Your account is overdrawn, sir, as it is, and they said—" hesitated the clerk. Kilworth glanced toward the pole where the men had perched outside. The men were gone.

"They told you not to cash any more of my checks?" asked Kilworth, nodding toward the back room, where the examiners had Dick Hale on the rack.

"Well—" the clerk answered, stopping, and added: "Not until this examination was —"

"All right, throw it out — throw it out!" cried Kilworth petulantly.

The clerk withdrew and Deborah asked: "Father, was that your check?"

"No," answered her father, putting his hands on the desk and dropping his head forward, "No, Debbie — that was Griffin's — Mary's husband — Mary's husband!" he moaned under his breath.

The girl persisted: "And he's got the money on it?"

"Yes," returned the father, "he's got the money on it; and probably spent it twice over by now."

"And that is forgery, and you can't help?" the girl inquired anxiously.

"I couldn't help him if it was \$70 instead of \$7,000 — now!" His words had the effect of closing the episode, and the two sat listlessly while the purposeless roar from the street filled the break in their talk. At length, as though he could stand the crowd's slow tearing at his nerves no longer, the father beat his hands despairingly on the desk and cried: "He has no money, and she has no money!"

"No money? Why, Father — I thought you told us all a year or so ago, that our money was segregated in trusts for us?"

"Gone — gone — gone," he answered miserably. "I turned it all in to the bank last night — all of it!" Again he looked quickly and fiercely at the window, and stopped as if in the midst of a sentence that he feared to finish. The girl cried exultingly:

"Oh — but I'm proud of you for that!" The father looked out of the window of his soul at her

as from the dead, and mourned: “But the girls — the poor, helpless girls! What can they do, what can they do without money?”

“What have they done with money, Father? Just ask yourself that!” replied the daughter quietly, adding: “Money got them their husbands; it could do nothing more horrible — now could it?”

He did not heed her but went on in self-pity: “Joel Ladgett won’t come in, and I had to send for Toney Delaney; and they say that the whole force down at the mills quit work an hour ago, and is coming up here to draw their money! And just before you came in, I saw Brother Vernon in here drawing out the church money — the church money. And I sit here and take it — I who have made them all — I take it.”

He was silent a long time; then he burst out: “‘Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?’” A soft thud of mud on the glass pane, and a shadow, directed their eyes to the window. Through the thin silk sash curtain, they saw some one chasing a boy through the crowd. Neither the father nor the daughter spoke until the break caused by the incident outside had been closed by

the rise of the shallow, weary voice of the crowd, resuming its interminable complaint. Then the girl said: "Father, you must come with me!" And because his resistance had been broken by the long, shameful hours when he had crumbled weakly before the three examiners, he yielded rather feebly and followed her through the back door of the building to her car.

Late in the afternoon, he sent for Toney Delaney and they talked together for half an hour. And that night, after Dick Hale had gone through another four hours on the examiners' rack, Delaney brought through the alley to the basement entrance of the bank, a cartload of iron washers of assorted sizes, and explained to Hale what Mr. Kilworth desired. He thought a showing of currency in the bank window might disperse the mob at the bank doors, and with the mob gone, he felt that he might work out some solution of his problem.

Young Hale took in the washers, told the examiner in charge of Boyce Kilworth's hope, called the examiner's attention to the fact that the currency on hand was really far above the legal reserve, and that the little depositors would not ma-

terially affect the bank's security if all of them withdrew. The examiner smiled, and nodded his consent.

So after reading in the morning papers Boyce Kilworth's hopeful statement, made to the reporters the night before, the crowd about the bank, when the curtain went up in the morning at nine o'clock, was further encouraged by the sight of a great heap of currency sacks, filled with bulging discs, and flowing out of the end of each sack on the pile — man high — was a flood of gold coins; a cascade of gold in the bank window, flanked and garnished with fat bundles of paper money. It was easy to estimate from the figures on the sacks, that half a million dollars was lying there in the window. Boyce Kilworth came down town in his limousine, stepped ponderously out of it at the bank door, and smiled like a preoccupied Providence at the throng that stood staring into the golden heap in the window. He walked up the steps and into the side door of the bank building, through a crowd that was almost respectful.

But the morning's grist of telegrams had brought to the examiners a fresh list of the Kilworth liabilities; and at nine o'clock all the mills

and industries of Boyceville sloughed into the wreck, and a line of workmen and women filed into the bank when it opened. At half-past nine Dick Hale appeared at the front window, carelessly picked up a sack of currency, shook it out, and a flood of gold eagles shimmered down the cascade. The crowd smiled as he took a scoop and scooped up a tray full of eagles — a mere drop from the flood — and carted the tray back into the teller's cage. Again at ten he did the same thing, and this time the crowd tried a faint squeak of a cheer. The cheer heartened up the clerks; but still the sorry-looking line trailed its weary way past the paying teller's window. A few minutes after Dick Hale had brought the second scoop full of gold from the window, Kilworth, heartened by the thready little cheer, had stepped to the front window of the bank and looked at the crowd. A few hats waved to him. His vanity pushed him to the front door, and there was again a faint yip, as of half suppressed cheers. Then Boyce Kilworth gave the crowd his smile — his forced, steely smile. Whereupon, Dick Hale became conscious that Henry Thompson was making his way from his ledger to the front of the bank. Dick,

in the teller's cage, could not see the satisfied smile on the poor son-in-law's face, as Thompson winked at the clerks near the front window. But when Dick saw Thompson approaching the sacks, mounting to the box behind the sacks, lifting his arms as if to touch the sacks, Dick turned from his window and called wildly: “Get away — get away from there!” Thompson's hands gripped the bottom of a sack and Dick yelled: “For God's sake — take that fool from the window.”

But Thompson smirked back, saying: “I want to make 'em cheer again for the old man,” and as Dick cried madly: “Drop it — drop it! Oh, oh — drop it!” he saw Thompson take two sacks by their bottom corners, shake them viciously, and then Hale saw the two gray streams of steel washers pass down upon the golden flood.

Kilworth did not see what was happening inside the window. But he saw the face of the crowd change, grow puzzled, and he heard a dreadful cry — shrill and high and wicked. Then came a wild roar and before he could move, someone had pulled him half falling down the steps of the bank, and a score of voices were crying: “Hang him — hang him!” After that life was a blur

of awful impressions. The fall into the street, and the rope — the horrible bruise of it under his ear — these things he remembered. But the cut on his face, the scratch on his neck, the bruises on his arms, and the loss of his coat and shirt, and the great tear up his trousers leg, all came to him when his mind was too distraught to record impressions in memory. So when the policemen brought him into the bank, a bleeding, half-naked, sobbing old man — he who had walked Constitution Street so proudly for fifty years — he fell in a shamed heap, half conscious and afraid, in his great chair, and shook in hysteria and terror.

The front windows of the bank were broken. The men outside had rescued the veneer of gold from the pile in the windows, but the mob kept surging in, and only pistol shots from the examiners stopped the intruders. Dust from falling plaster was in the air and the roar of the balked crowd came like the bark of some rabid beast, into the ears of the group that stood around the figure that was Boyce Kilworth, huddled in his heavy throne-like chair.

Then in due course they took him home. A squad of mounted policemen appeared at the side

door of the bank, and the mob hooted. When Kilworth, supported by the policemen, limped to his car, he heard the crowd cat-calling and hissing. The horsemen about his car tried to screen him from the jeering throng; and when he was gone the baffled rioters stayed behind in the street and howled their rage out.

So Boyce Kilworth rode out of Constitution Street. An hour after he was gone, the examiner in charge pasted this notice on the yellow pine boards that marked the place where the window had been:

“This bank is closed, by order of
the comptroller of the currency.

“S. HORTON,

“Temporary Receiver.”

The evening papers carried the story of the mob, and were kind to Boyce Kilworth; they even played up in big type his statement that the bank was sound; that it would pay its depositors in full. The word “arrest” was the only unfriendly word in the evening papers, and Kilworth’s friends resented it loudly on the streets, and in the newspaper office that evening.

When Dick Hale went home that night he found his mother in the midst of one of her clamorous cataclysmic tantrums; the bank failure seemed to have started her, but her grievances were running back to events thirty years before, and the son ate his evening meal in shame and silence. At eight o'clock Colonel Longford came hobbling in — plump into the midst of a particularly rampant tirade from Mrs. Hale. She stood glaring at the Colonel a fierce moment, then vanished, and Caleb Hale looked up unruffled and began to hum:

“ Sister, thou art mild and lovely
“ Gentle as the summer breeze,”

At the end of the stanza he paused to sigh.

“ Well, Colonel? So that's the end of Boyce Kilworth! ”

“ Poor, poor Boyce,” replied the Colonel, “ I spent the afternoon with him, and it seemed to help him to talk — to talk it all over from the beginning; from the time when he helped to stuff the ballot box, and farmed out the county money.” The Colonel got out two black cigars, and the old men lighted them.

“ Boyce,” resumed the Colonel, sitting tilted

back in a chair, peering through uplifted bony knees at the universe, “Boyce hasn’t got it yet. Lord — Lord, why couldn’t he break the tether — the thing that bound him, limited him, baffled him, and now is killing him. Just a little beyond him, just outside the circle that he trod and maybe strained to break from, lay greatness and happiness. If he could only — only have had a heart!”

“Taking it rather hard — I guess?” asked Caleb Hale. Dick went to his room and did not hear the Colonel’s further lesson and collect upon the day’s events. The Colonel smoked a while and answered:

“Yes — damn — hard! That other Pharisee, condemned to simmer forever in his own juice on the trashpile outside Jerusalem, is having a tolerably comfortable time, compared with Boyce, Cale!”

“Kind of wants his money back — I take it?” suggested Hale.

“Yes, that too,” returned the Colonel. “Wants his money, and his power, and his Providential relation to the town all back. But his girls are left penniless, and he thinks they’re ruined.”

The Colonel mused, " And I guess they are just about ruined without money — the kind he's raised — all but Debbie. And he's worried about Mrs. Kilworth — the dear old canary, what'll she do for pepper-grass and cuttlebone, outside the golden cage. You see, money — just sheer, raw money has been his dependence, and his family's dependence, and when it's gone — it's the God's truth — what is there to him or them without it? "

" Hell? — ain't it? " came back Caleb Hale in the silence.

" And six to carry, Cale! " assented the Colonel. " But that isn't the worst of it — as I started to tell you. He sits there slumped all over mentally and morally — without faith in man or God, or himself — bewailing the fact that he has ruined the lives of thousands of people. I says:

" ' Boyce, you can't ruin people by taking money from them — not even all their money.' He stared at me as though I was mad, and moaned on. Then I says:

" ' Boyce,' sez I, ' Boyce, can't you get it through your head that other people aren't made or unmade by money? Suppose you've taken all they've got — some of 'em — lots of 'em, maybe.

They'll feel the slice of the knife and it will hurt like sixty — but only for a day or a week or a month or a year. They'll adjust themselves; their life's philosophy will make them happy or unhappy entirely independent of this money you've taken!'

"He kept on weaving back and forth, and didn't hear it. I tell you, Cale, you couldn't get the truth of life into him with an axe! And that's the real hell up there at Boyce's. He's frying on the hot griddle of a remorse that he has ruined ten thousand lives irrevocably, and forever, so twenty thousand hands are pressing him down on the bars of that grid and his agony is sickening!"

The old man breathed hard as he remembered what he had seen, and he spat out a pious damn of sympathy. "He tells me he can't pray, and he believes his God has forsaken him, and that it doesn't make any difference what he does now." The Colonel smoked a while and said: "Cale, in the war, I saw men kill each other fighting hand to hand. I've seen men walk right up to death in front of the guns. But I never saw a man lose his God before. I'm sorry for him — poor Boyce — I'm sorry as the devil for him, Cale."

Hale shifted his position in his chair and answered harshly:

“ Well — I’m not.” The two pairs of old eyes met, and Hale went on: “ Colonel — did you ever think of the other loss that this failure brings to men — the loss of faith?” He stood musing a moment, then lifted up his face and went on, abashed: “ I don’t care how much money I won in the old game — back in the old days; though I did win — more or less.” His face slowly reddened in shame as he went on in a subdued voice: “ But, Colonel — when I wake up in the night — from a deep sleep, with my soul all washed of the day stains — then I see what I was in those days, what my winning meant to thousands who saw me win — neighbours, friends, young boys — a whole community — I debauched ’em, cut into their faith in the moral government of this world, by lying and stealing and cheating and winning and winning — getting away unscathed of God and man — and that’s what shrivels my soul in abasement — that’s what makes me cry: ‘ God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, Colonel,” cried Hale angrily, “ it’s not what a hypocrite does, not what he gets out of life, that makes him hated;

it's what he is, and the poison to our faith that he spreads — that's why men picture him as a snake ! And, by the eternal, that's why —”

“ That's why you're not sorry for Boyce ? ” interrupted the Colonel.

“ That's why I've watched him year after year, a great whited sepulchre — doing all that I used to do, but shamming all that men at their best would be; and that's why I've dreaded to-day, like the coming of a terror — to-day when all his sham is exposed, and men have lost faith in — in —”

“ I know, Cale, I know,” said the Colonel gently.

“ N — no — perhaps you don't know all — not all, Colonel. It's this: I have in me, bigger than a horse, a desire to restore the faith of this town in that man; I'd give my immortal soul to do it — for my soul's not important. Until a man's willing to send his soul to hell for his creed, it isn't much of a creed, anyway. But — Colonel — I've been thinking over a plan. I should have called you up if you hadn't come in. Maybe I can help — maybe I haven't lived in vain. If I could only feel —”

The telephone rang, cutting short Hale's sentence. Dick Hale was called from his room to answer it, and in the bustle of his leaving on the summons of the telephone the thread of Hale's discourse was cut, and the two cronies fell to gossiping about the practical affairs of the bank — its assets — and what they were, and its liabilities as each had heard of them through Kilworth and young Dick.

Dick Hale went out in response to a call that said over the phone: "Dick — Dick — is this you? Father insists on seeing you to-night. He says he needs you. Won't you come up right away?"

When Deborah Kilworth heard far down the street the familiar step of Dick Hale, she rose from her porch swing in the veranda, and stood at the top of the steps that led into the garden, and ran eagerly to meet him when she heard him at the gate. She put out a hand to welcome him, and he would have kept it in his, but she whispered: "Don't, Dick — every other bush here is a policeman." But she did take his arm, and he felt the fugitive pressure she gave as they walked toward the veranda.

They stopped in the heavy dusk of the veranda a moment, and talked in whispers. “Oh, Dick — you good boy — I’m so glad you’re here!” the girl said, still holding to his arm, as she added: “All the afternoon and evening — I’ve wanted you; it’s been so horrible — this evening worse than to-day; yes, Dick — worse than to-day. Father has changed so. I couldn’t very well send for you. I had no excuse. And now that father’s sent — Oh, Dick — I’m so afraid of father — the way he is now.”

“Is he — worse — sick, I mean?” whispered the young man.

“Sick?” answered the girl. “Sick! — Why, if he was just sick — or even dead — but he’s changed so. I don’t know father as he is! He sits in there cursing — my father — why, Dick — I don’t believe he ever uttered an oath in his life, and he sits in there cursing everything, and everybody — with some kind of a demon glaring out of his eyes, and he’s sent for you.” She looked intently up into the strong, careworn face of the young man and then went on: “I’m frightened, Dick — frightened — I don’t know why — maybe for you; perhaps for father or —”

Again she stopped, and drew the young man deeper into the shadow, clasped his hand and spoke again: "Oh, Dick — promise me you won't — no matter what father says — break any more — any more rules for him! Promise me that, Dick!"

A flapping curtain startled them; but the girl stood before the door, and pleaded with her eyes. The young man was puzzled. "Why, Debbie — you shouldn't bind me in advance. Your father has made all but a son of me — I shouldn't promise — not in advance, Deb —"

"But when you see him, Dick — you'll understand — father — poor, poor —"

"Debbie —" cried a harsh, strident voice from the house, "didn't I hear that young Hale come up the steps?"

"Yes, Father — he's coming," answered the girl. And she led Dick Hale into the hall, through the darkened living room back to the library.

"Get out — you —," the father snarled to the daughter as Hale came into the circle of the study lamp, "and mind you stay out," he added, "and

don't come around listening to what ain't none of your business!"

When she had gone Boyce Kilworth stared savagely up at the drawn, tired face of the man before him. "Criminal charges," he growled, "criminal charges against me; that's what Toney Delaney seen down at the newspaper offices from them damn vultures of examiners!" The younger man was silent in a pause, and Kilworth bawled out: "Well? — well? — do you think I'm going to stand it? — me? — No, by God, I'm not! I never touched a pen to paper and you know it; they haven't got nothing — not a damn scratch of a pen on me. Not on me!" he cried, shaking both his great fists angrily, and wincing as his bruised arm caught him.

Dick Hale, standing in amazement, began looking for a chair as he said: "Well, Mr. Kilworth, I suppose — I mean, naturally I thought —"

"Who told you to sit down," snapped the old canine voice. "Listen here, boy! I'm an old man. I've been bled by them damn leeches down there at the bank out of all my money — all

my money," he shouted. "All my girls' money! All my interest in the mills, in the Investment Company — everything I got, and this evening they came up here and talked me out of this house — the roof over my gray head; an' I give it to 'em! And still I'm a quarter of a million short — and so they run to the reporters and talk about criminal charges, and get it to Toney Delaney!"

"Now, what can I do, Mr. Kilworth — to help? I want to help, sir," said young Hale.

"Well, boy — now listen! I'm an old man. You're young. This is my defence to these criminal charges: I was no bookkeeper; I was no penman. You was — both, and you got me into this. That's my defence, sir. Do you get my idea?" He was gazing wickedly into the astonished young face before him as he cried viciously: "And what's your defence?" He repeated his question, and yelped: "Legs — legs is your defence — run — run —"

A flush covered Dick Hale's face as he opened his mouth and burst forth: "Mr. Kilworth — are you crazy!"

"Run — run — run! I say. Get to South Africa, and they can't bring you back from

there! ” He was talking fast and looking at the scratches on his right hand as he spoke, but he looked up furtively and asked: “ Ain’t that fair? Ain’t I treatin’ you square — comin’ into my business and wreckin’ me and it too? Ain’t I givin’ you a show? You take that Oklahoma oil stuff — land and leases, and it’ll start you up down there and make a man of you, maybe — if they ain’t too much damn ornery Hale blood in you! ”

In the silence that followed the old man’s tirade Dick Hale stood with his hands deep in his pockets, his head cocked on one side, squinting into the coarsened plaster-striped face of Boyce Kilworth. After a moment Hale said: “ As to the oil leases and those matters, I made them over to the bank — this morning. It was only fair; the money you lent me for my start in the matter came out of the bank, so far as that goes.”

Kilworth lowered at Hale and sneered: “ Well, I’m glad you had that much decency about you.” He paused and added: “ Now, what you going to do about it? Stay here and bicker with me — and we both go to jail — or git out and leave me so’s I can support my family and get on my feet again? ”

"Putting it that way, Mr. Kilworth — you interest me," said Hale. "At least, let's talk it over." He was thinking earnestly as he looked at the floor, and was speaking in a preoccupied voice, as he went on: "Of course, if I go, I go as a forger and a thief."

"What's that?" cut in Kilworth, listening.

"It's this, Father," cried Deborah, entering the room. "If Dick goes as a forger and a thief, I go with him as the wife of a forger and a thief!"

The old man opened his mouth, partly in surprise, partly in rage, and showed his coarse, glittering, golden teeth, before he hit back:

"What — what?"

"Oh, Debbie, Debbie!" The young man held out his arms, and she came into them, "This is worth the whole day's torment — Oh, this — this —" He felt the pressure of her hands in his and the pressure of her body against him strong and unshaken. The two with glistening eyes faced the father in silence. He rose, started around the table toward his daughter, but stopped, putting his hand to his head as though a blow there had checked him, but he shouted after a

second's halt and pause: “ You wouldn't follow off a forger, would you — a little — little — whiffet, who'd ruined your father — not a thief, would you, girl? ”

“ Even a thief, Father, if it comes to that. But I know the truth — the truth — the truth! ” She clasped her arms closely about the young figure beside her and hid her face as she trembled with joy.

Boyce Kilworth, still with his hand to his temple, stumbled back to his place behind the table, moaning in rage and pain. He started in fear as he heard a shuffling in the hall, followed by the cry: “ Get away — get away from here, I tell you! ” Then he recognised the familiar voice of Colonel Longford. “ I tell you we're going to see Boyce — we've got business with him. ” The girl and the young man were standing far apart when the Colonel came in and they saw behind him Caleb Hale. The Colonel carried a handful of Hale's Delphiniums, and Caleb Hale brought in, clumsily tucked under his arm, a thin, broad sheet-iron box, earth-stained and rusted. The men smiled abashed, and Colonel Longford spoke: “ Boyce — here's a man's got something to say to

you. I brought Miss Deborah some flowers, but Cale here has brought something else."

"Well, get it over with — quick — I'm tired!" grunted Kilworth.

"So you're tired, are you, Boyce Kilworth," began Caleb Hale, his wrinkled, gnarled face twisting nervously as he spoke. "Tired — eh? Well, I surmised life wasn't exactly exhilarating for you these days. So I just dropped over with a little something to chirp you up — as it were!"

He looked down deprecatingly at his flat tin box, and Kilworth, following Hale's eyes, retorted: "I don't want none of your damn charity!"

"Fie — fie!" joked Caleb. "Also tut, tut — what's this naughty word from the holy man of Uz? Anyway — it's not for you — so don't trouble yourself about the charity — though," he added grimly, "you've got to take it." He looked — sniffed, perhaps, is a better word — into the patched face from which Kilworth's insane eyes glared forth. Then into Caleb Hale's scarred, battered countenance shone a clear glow of dignity out of an exalted soul. "It's not much I am bringing," he began quietly, but in his voice

as in his face there was a dominance of spirit that set him apart from the group around him, as he went on: “It is nothing but — money — just government bonds — some poor government bonds — two hundred and seventy-thousand dollars’ worth, to be exact; so it’s merely money after all.” His steady eyes met those of Boyce Kilworth that glared like the eyes of a hungry wolf. Hale looked sadly into the ferocious eyes and smiled kindly as he went on: “I say it’s not much — just some money — or what is the same. But it’s not for you; not even for those you’ve robbed — directly and primarily. I guess I stole this money — some way. At least I didn’t earn it by the sweat of my brow or my brain; I got it gambling — on a mine! And I’ve had it — buried in my garden — all these twenty years —” he smiled about the room, and went on, “but I’ve been afraid to use it.” His voice hardened and deepened and the muscles of his face tightened as he spoke. “I knew if I ever began with it I was gone. I’d gamble with it — gamble in wheat — or stocks — or something, and so, like the coward I’ve been, I’ve tried my soul every day by going and prodding all that money buried

under my Delphinium bed, and then, knowing that I was strong enough to resist the temptation, I've said a little child's prayer of thanks, and I've gone on doing my real work in the world." He looked at the blue flowers and his wrinkled old face beamed with pride.

"So here it is, Boyce Kilworth, and it's not for you — not even for the folks you've robbed, and least of all for this boy of mine — Oh, I would sooner think of feeding him poison than think of giving him this money — now! Not until he's old enough to know what it means. It's all here — two hundred and seventy thousand dollars' worth of government bonds — with not a coupon clipped in all these twenty odd years." He put it on the table, and Boyce Kilworth's hands went out like fangs to the box. "No, Boyce Kilworth — not yours — not Dick's — not your depositors!" Hale kept his hand on the box and looked bashfully at Colonel Longford, and went on: "I don't know, Colonel, as I can rightly tell these people how it is — I wasn't exactly expecting to see Dick and Miss Kilworth here," he stopped, "so I hesitate, rather, to say what I had to say before."

"Don't mind me, Mr. Hale," interrupted the

girl, “ I know the worst — the very worst — worse than you — about things as they are here ! ”

But Caleb Hale paused, and Colonel Longford, dropping his cane, straightened up to say : “ Well, now then — I can talk and talk plain, Boyce. Cale and I have been talking this thing over. We know you. We know you are a canting, psalm-singing, hypocritical scoundrel — begging Debbie’s pardon, for the plain words. You’ve always been that. But you’ve some way got thousands of people to pin their faith in you. We don’t care how much money you take from them. But, by robbing them, you reveal yourself as a sham; you rob them not only of money — which is not important, but you rob thousands, and really hundreds of thousands of people of their faith — faith in a lot of things, Boyce, beside yourself — faith in God is one of them. Faith is scarce enough on this planet, and Cale, here, thinks, and I agree with him, that though it is a sneaking, lying, dastardly thing to brace you up when you ought to be roasting in the hell your hands have made — still — faith is faith, and it’s more than all the money in the world.”

Boyce Kilworth’s face showed that he could

not follow the Colonel's words. "Oh, you'll not understand it, Boyce — God knows your poor mind is a blank along these lines. But Cale and I — we feel deeply that this money here, if ever it is to have a consecrated use — now is the time."

A flash of intelligent joy lightened Kilworth's face. Down in his heart a pump shook with a deep throb of hope. He looked a dog-like gratitude, yet uncertain, and Colonel Longford cried:

"Take it — take the miserable stuff — and lie — lie for the glory of God, and tell 'em it's yours; that you've always had it, and that you can pay up dollar for dollar as you said you would! Take it — not for you — not for your depositors, though it's got to go that way; but take it for the sake of a miserable sinner who had God's mercy once and wants to make this small return in sustaining the faith of his fellows. Take it, you damned old scoundrell!" He shoved the box across the desk, and turned to Caleb Hale who stood watching greed and self-respect — curious companions — as they were being reborn on Boyce Kilworth's face. Kilworth reached for the box, opened it, looked at a bond, held it to the light,

counted the unclipped coupons, thumbed down into the box, and spoke no word. But the pump in his heart was jumping like a machine with a shattered governor. The ashen face flushed, and his mouth watered, and he all but drooled, while the eyes of those about him saw another self coming out of the depths into the ghastly visage.

The Colonel beckoned Caleb Hale, and the two old men withdrew; the lovers, with linked hands, followed softly. The man at the desk was not aware that he was alone. He was breathing deeply and hard. The Colonel and Hale quietly closed the outer door and left the house. In the hall, where the lovers had stopped for their first fleeting, shy kiss, they heard a voice — the old raucous voice of Boyce Kilworth, crying: “This ends —” he seemed to stop, then he went on, “those criminal charges.”

They thought they heard him cry sharply in a choked voice: “Oh, my God, my merciful God,” and their hands tightened; for they felt Boyce Kilworth was praying. So they sat in the deep, sweet joy of love’s first deep silence.

Then, hearing no sound from within the room

beyond, they rose and went in. And there they found that Boyce Kilworth's words were not a prayer. He was only answering a bailiff who haled him to a High Court.

"A PROSPEROUS GENTLEMAN"

The Thane of Cawdor lives, a prosperous gentleman.

— *Macbeth.*

PART I

WHEN our grandfathers — heaven rest them! — "crossed the prairies as of old our fathers crossed the sea," they brought their womankind with them, after the manner of the Teuton. The women brought their flower seeds; and where those seeds were planted civilisation came to stay. Not the schoolhouse, or the court house, or the saloon, or the statesman, or the real-estate agent proclaimed the permanency of this state-building Northern white man so indelibly as the beds of humble petunias and zinnias and larkspurs.

When these flowers blossomed in the desert, heralding the swift coming of the old-fashioned roses, there, indeed, was raised the everlasting Ebenezer of the race. There was consecrated ground. Over these Western plains of ours the Cross had come, and had crumbled and was for-

gotten. Grass had grown over the adobe walls of deserted churches and nameless forts where the sword of conquest lay rusting until the plough uncovered a degraded splendour.

The Cross and the sword came with pomp and pride; and the outcast Indian woman smiled bitterly, but took them, and her half-breed children lost the Cross and the sword in the wilderness, while a just God righted her wrongs — for it is a law of progress that a wronged woman's tears shall salt the ground where they are shed. So it was not until the petunias came, and the four-o'clocks and asters — it was not until the great hollyhocks and poppies glowed about the feet of a happy, free-born womanhood that God let the land prosper and made the flower garden the sign of His covenant with men.

A long time ago — in the beginning, two generations ago, in fact — in those days when the grandmothers of New Raynham were young and presumably beautiful, even that first summer of the town's history, when the settlement was picketed against the Indians and mothers huddled with their young in the little stone schoolhouse many an anxious night, while the men rode the

hills and stood guard at the fords — even then, about the unpainted, yellow-pine, one-roomed houses on the prairie there were flowers. And even then Mercy Hayden's flower bed was the prettiest in the village.

A woman of parts was Mercy Hayden — a handsome woman she was, with clear brown eyes; and many tubs-ful of water she drew from the well by the kitchen door to pour on her flowers. Israel, her husband, was a busy little man, and on him rested great affairs. He was perennial chairman of the committee to do something that was never done. He was forever bustling round trying to get the committee together to act. So when the drought of 'sixty came, Israel, as chairman of the committee on aid, was sent East to tell the people of the famine, while at home the windlass creaked day and night at the Hayden well — the only well in all the valley that never ran dry.

Mercy Hayden, in man's boots and a faded blue jeans dress, bent her body to the wheel and sent scores of women home laden with water. She did not let her flowers wilt; and the next spring, when the rain came and Israel came bustling home with it, he found a small white-and-

pink blossom blooming in a home-made walnut cradle; for Constance Hayden had come to Pleasant Ridge to grow up with the flowers.

In the wondrous seasonal procession of the flowers one may trace an analogy between their passing show and the life of man. Of course such analogies are more or less imaginative, but the first flowers of spring seem to bear more than a fanciful resemblance to the sweet innocence of childhood. As the year opens to its promise, what is the rose but love? What is the peony but joy? And the poppy — the scarlet, shameless poppy — if there had been no word in the world for the memory of a kiss, the poppy would have saved the thrill for us.

Across the unfenced fields among the spring flowers, innocent and beautiful — the dogtooth violets, the wild lupines, the anemones and primroses — the brown, unshod feet of the little girl wandered. And Elias Higginson, following the town herd from hill to ford, used to think of the child in his slow boyish fancy as a gay moving flower, fluttering over the wide green stretches of the unploughed fields. But, though the little girl played joyously among the wild flowers of the

prairie, she knew and took to her heart the homely garden flowers in the kitchen yard. And as she moved through the town with her schoolbooks under her arm — first her little primer, then her big geography, and finally her fat geometry — the eyes of Elias Higginson continued to follow her slight figure.

The town saw her among the other children and said: "Her mother's face and her father's ways!" And the town smiled and loved her, for the town understood her father's ways. In a decade or so every man in a new community, or every new man in an old community, is shaken down to his level. And Israel Hayden found his place naturally. The town understood how Israel's "old army trouble" had forced him from the confinement of his real-estate and insurance office into a grocery store, where he clerked and drove the delivery wagon; and then the town accepted without question his explanation that it was only to oblige a dying comrade that he bought the comrade's dray and plied it, doing odd jobs that required no heavy lifting.

So her father's ways, in the mouth of the town, even though her father's ways were not ascendant,

carried no opprobrium with them. They were gentle ways and kindly, and the town saw the flower that Mercy Hayden always kept in Israel's coat lapel; and the town understood the situation and was kind.

Not even the proud Herringtons jeered at Israel Hayden's declining station; and Charley Herrington, whose youth was spent in a military school, and who was a sort of town prince of the blood, sometimes rode homeward on Israel's dray to display an ostentatious democracy.

The years went by, until one year came when Constance Hayden came to know the roses and what they meant; but they were not Elias Higginson's roses. From his farm cabin, into which he had built his heart's secret, he saw the little girl of his day-dreams move on into another sphere. When she was sixteen Constance finished in the town high school. Her mother, foreseeing the day when Israel's army trouble might make even light work impossible, cast about her for something the girl could do. So one fine summer day found Constance Hayden, a small young woman, sitting in a large chair before a huge ledger, keeping books in the Herrington office.

Keeping books at that time and in that place was a genteel employment. Women had not found themselves outside the home; and Constance, in the grand office of the magnificent Herringtons, did not realise how lightly she was esteemed. She felt that the weight of the universe was on her, without knowing that she was really only half servant and half toy; but when she came to know the roses, and they were Charley Herrington's roses, the light of the aforesaid universe seemed to beam on her. She kept the roses on her desk behind the huge ledger; and often at noontime, when the office was all but deserted, Charley Herrington would slip behind the ledger with her, and they would play that it was a secret bower. When the youth left, the maiden breathed the roses deeply, and they brought into the secret bower a thousand joys; for, after all, it is the fond recollections of youth rather than of age that are sweetest.

When days and weeks and months form the vista through which we look into a gently receding past, instead of through years and decades, we recollect more vividly and the pleasures of memory are keener. So when Constance Hayden

looked from the threshold of her twenties into the remote period of her late teens, and recalled tenderly delights that she had breathed in, with other roses in other years (to be exact, the year before) she seemed to herself exceedingly old and wise. And the angels, knowing how young she was in truth, how new to all sin and sorrow and suffering was her girlish heart — the angels must have saddened, as much as angels ever can sadden when they see how blindly we walk through this world.

It was a clandestine affair — the love affair between Charley Herrington and Constance Hayden, the drayman's daughter in the Herrington office; for she was just that in Charley Herrington's heart — the drayman's daughter in his father's office. And he was, in his own view of it, a young person divinely anointed by the unction of a prospective inheritance, one of the rulers — one of the chosen few.

They say that our lives are formed, our careers marked, our choice of destinies made, when we are twenty-five; that after that nothing comes into the mind which was not planted there before the closing days of our youth. That fact is one of the cruelest facts of life; for inheritance and en-

vironment had planted in Charley Herrington's heart a sad and miserable bed of poisons. The age had planted its shams; its false valuations; its meaningless architecture, its fortunes founded on fraud; its lies and cheats in religion, and its mawkish sentiment in art.

The home had told Charley Herrington that money makes right; that money brings happiness; that money marks the distinctions among men, and that those who have no money have no rights. “To them who have money, shall be given money; and from them who have no money, shall be taken away even that which they have,” was the family interpretation of Christ's great spiritual truth. So, in choosing his destiny, Charley Herrington had chosen with blind eyes.

Partly he was to blame for his blindness, for the truth is always near us; but much of the blame for his sordid choice in life's great decision between the ways of life was due to the age and its envioning shams — for it was a material age and in it youth had few visions.

Yet youth is ever youth; it must express itself in whatever age life makes. So the gay young man slipped through the sunflowers and the high

weeds that bordered the town into the unpainted home of the Haydens. The parents welcomed him as a young prince. They did not comprehend that he was merely a light young person, flirting out of his class. He played among the flowers, a gay girl-eating butterfly. And when the roses came in May there was no man or God or angel to spoil his joy in them — only this that might have intervened: Elias Higginson — silent, ignored, forgotten — hovered ever about the Hayden home, corroding his heart with jealousy; a shamed but fascinated spy on the lovers.

Then one night — one glorious summer night — when the pale harvest moon was lighting a gray sky, the youth and the maiden sat alone among the fading larkspurs. The dahlias were at their full and the summer was past its climax. That night Constance Hayden faced her tragedy. It is such an old, old tragedy, recorded a million, million times since life began and love came into the heart of youth. The heart-break and anguish of this particular kind of tragedy is that it comes when life is young — all unprepared by philosophy and experience to meet the trial.

Every period of life has its distinctive heart-

break. Death, that makes the tragedy of maturity, does not crush youth, and perfidy does not beat down men and women in their forties. But when this girl, in the gray night, saw lies faltering on the lips she had trusted; when she saw vanity and deceit in the man she adored; when she knew that love could not bind him to honour — there came to her, greater than love, more powerful than self-respect, a big, chattering fear, which rises in us when we have lost everything. She fell on her knees at his feet and begged in quick whispers. She tore at his clothing in a frenzy of terror.

“No!” he said, as he tried to turn away. “I tell you I’ve bought my ticket and I’ve got to go on the early morning train.”

“But, God — why, God — Dear God, let me pray!” she panted, clutching his legs as he turned away. “Oh, dear God, don’t do this to me! What have I done? Oh, Charley — Charley — Dear God! Can’t you make him see what — how mother — and oh, Charley — there’s father — dear —”

He broke from her and stepped beyond her reach. He lacked courage to run, but stood

beside the faded larkspur bed, where she was groping on her knees.

"Ah, brace up, Connie! Don't be a fool! You're just as much to blame —" He looked at her trying to rise and went on: "And, anyway, Con, I keep telling you —"

She stumbled to her feet and in her hand she held a wisp of flower stalks. She was trembling and sobbing.

"The larkspur's all faded — all withered and faded!" she repeated, holding it out toward him beseechingly. "The larkspur's all faded — like me." She caught her breath as she cried: "All faded — like me!"

He ran through the garden and down the weedy road; and when he came to the board sidewalk that led him to the thick of the little town, with its sham architecture and its false pretences, he shuddered as he walked; for he, too, was young and could not face what he had done without wincing.

The week after he came home in the late autumn Constance Hayden died. Her death might have been suicide or it might have been murder; but in either case the town saw her a victim —

little and poor and young, and essentially innocent. And at the black wrong of her death the town boiled with sudden fury. In her lover's trunk, an hour after her death, the officer who came to arrest Charley Herrington found her letters, her pitiful, pleading letters. These letters were read in court.

The dead girl's mother did not come to the courtroom — she could not face the shame of it; but Israel Hayden came, a little, ineffective, oldish man, in his frayed, brushed, old-fashioned Sunday best, with a foolish flower on his coat lapel. He looked with weak, watery blue eyes at the jury, at the reporters, at the judge on the bench, and at the prisoner, who sat, as the papers declared, “nonchalantly through it all”; and Charley changed colour only when a bunch of faded larkspurs fell from the first letter read by the prosecuting attorney. He shuddered for a second and played nervously with his blond moustache; but in a few minutes was smiling at his arrogant father, who sat beside the prisoner rather grandly, like a tin god in iron-grey whiskers.

By one of those subterranean manœuvres common in country politics, Elias Higginson had worked himself on the jury list and had sworn

himself into the jury box. He sat, grim-faced and terrible, glowering at the handsome young defendant from the minute the jury was accepted; but his hatred was impotent. The dead girl's letters constituted the only evidence against the young man and the jury disagreed. When a new prosecuting attorney was elected he continued the case term after term until the judge struck it from the docket. And so the tragedy of Constance Hayden passed and the world rolled on.

PART II

In a decade the comrades of the Grand Army laid Israel away in a bower of homely flowers, with a posy on his breast. Mercy, his widow, sold the home; and when she left the town for New England the flower garden faded and would have disappeared had not another woman, with joy in her heart, rented the Hayden place the next spring. Another family grew up among the flowers, and life, with its wonderful panorama, wrought its changes, while the changeless flowers looked on. The town grew big and black with coal smoke, and strong and ruthless with capital.

When Charley Herrington walked from the

courtroom under a nominal bond after the mis-trial of the case against him, people shook their heads and said: "He'll never get over it; he can't live this down!" But he walked to a cigar stand near the courthouse, filled his pockets with ten-cent cigars — not for tribute or defence, but for his own solace — and took up life with apparent good cheer. The cheer on his face was only apparent, however, for his soul had been scalded with the fury of public opinion, and that soul winced and trembled behind his lonely cigar every hour of the day.

It seemed to the young man that he met at least one of those jurymen whenever he walked on the street; and people who had sat in the courtroom, leaning forward, gaping and red-faced, to hear those letters read, filed by the young man in a never-ending procession for years and years. During the trial the wrath of a score of fathers had translated itself into talk of lynching, which came to the proud Herrington family; and these fathers were forever crowding into cars with Herrington, sitting in public places beside him, and confronting him in stores and offices as he went about his business.

The long list of citizens who had hired an attorney to assist the county prosecutor was seared on the young man's mind; and each name remained an object of hatred with him. Yet he faced the town — though, for the most part, alone — with a smile so firm that men called it the Herrington-grin years after they had forgotten why he turned the corners of his mouth up instead of down.

He went into his father's bank and worked steadily; and men said: "Well, Charley's getting down to business!" He drove a good horse — but not too good — and he always drove alone; and he drove many a mile out of his way to avoid seeing Mercy Hayden's flower garden. He had strange things to drink in his locker at the club, but did not drink much of them and always drank alone.

He bought doubtful assets of the bank at liberal discounts, forced the assets to collection; and the directors nodded wise heads and called Charley a chip off the old block. Then the old block went to the fire, and Charley Herrington supported two horses, rather fast steppers for a country town; and they would not go past Mercy Hayden's old-fashioned garden, either.

Charley got under the ancestral plug hat and went on mysterious trips to the West and South, where he was known as an Eastern capitalist — for you must understand that in New Mexico and Arizona, the Missouri Valley is called the East.

And as an Eastern capitalist Charley Herrington brought home to the First National Bank of New Raynham much curious paper. In his bag were irrigation bonds of various projects where it was twenty miles to water — up, down or sideways; municipal bonds of towns where they counted prairie dogs to make up a legal population; mining stock that covered gopher holes; and mortgages on land where the coyote and the cactus were the only staple crops.

It was at this interesting stage of his journey through the vale of tears, however, that Charley Herrington quit buying the bank's doubtful assets, and made such changes in the directorate that the bank became a customer for his securities. Under his high hat, with his grand manner, in his rented private car, when Charles Herrington entered a sage-brush principality he went as a satrap visiting his province, and men came running out to meet him. He bought lavishly of what they

had to sell, but he insisted on all commissions, promoter's profits, gratuities and perquisites being made over to him before he would talk business.

He squeezed one poor Cripple Creek gold miner, with a daughter to sell, so ruthlessly that when young Charley brought home his new wife they said in the bank that he sweated beads of gold ore, like roasted quartz, for a year after the wedding.

Among the dummy bank directors who bought the Herrington assets at Charley's bidding the bride was known as the incontrovertible asset; but the bridegroom kept her most of the time in Europe or in New York, where her father's name was well known in financial circles, and used her as a sort of daily New York balance. In the middle of the nineties Herrington left the Southwest as a hunting ground, partly because of certain wide areas where he could not go without danger of arrest or of summons to suits for damages.

He opened an office — a rather modest office — on Lower Broad Street in New York as a broker in Western securities, and also had the

name of his Missouri Valley Bank printed on his office door.

In New Raynham he remained Charley Herrington, of the First National; and because there came into the town in due course, but on rare occasions, riding a Shetland pony with much pomp, a grandson of the Cripple Creek Bonanza King, known as little Charley Herrington, the father, still in his forties, became known as Old Charley Herrington. He was gray before he was fifty; his face took on a granite cast, and his eyes were sharp and keen and hard.

He was a liberal giver to all the town institutions that begged their way: the churches, the Y. M. C. A., the public library, the band, the Christmas fund of the lodges. And he was an affable, amiable, smiling, half lovable, altogether lonely sort of fellow, who kept so far aloof from the town's business and political factions as to have few enemies. Yet he estimated everything in terms of dollars. It was worth what it would bring, or if not, it was worth the money invested in it. He was as joyless and taciturn about his money to his associates in business as he was about everything else; but, as a matter of fact, everything else

of his life covered a small area. He had quit reading books because he found things in them that irritated the scalded spot in his soul. He had scarcely been a part of the social activities of his town for something like the same reason. Men said he was inordinately modest and self-effacing; but he feared fame too — just as he feared to go to court to assert his rights in business deals.

Time and again he was about to make a boast of the fact that he had never had a lawsuit, but he always saw to what exception the boast would lead him and refrained from it. At home in New Raynham he took no leading part in anything, for fear he would call down criticism on himself; and away from home he avoided newspaper notoriety, and always met former citizens of his home town with diffidence and obvious constraint. The scalded spot on his soul, instead of healing and growing smaller, began to eat; and its infection began to sink deeper into his life.

As for his wife and the transient home they kept, she and the home did not help matters for Herrington. The wife was a noisy, extreme sort of person, whose figure changed with the modes,

and who loved to play the aristocrat on the townspeople, whom she called the natives. She drew about her a fast and rather impossible young set, and hooted at the attempts of the women in the town who tried to better conditions through the City Federation, the Library Board and the Civic Improvement League.

So the Herringtons remained an alien family in their home town — a social anomaly. Thus, in his middle fifties, when thirty years' living with the gnawing ulcer on his soul had made its symptoms a part of his life, Charley Herrington was a repressed, colourless, wiry, white-haired, flint-visaged man, with suspicious, furtive eyes, one of which was curtained by a cynical drooping lid. He gave the impression of one living with under-spiritual nourishment, without having a wicked face. He looked morally hungry. His reckless manner fooled no one into thinking him brave. He was eager without enthusiasm, and often revealed a flashing, greedy desire for some commonplace of human companionship that disclosed the lonesome, unspent life he had lived. The soul that shone through his emotionless face was not the mildly blanching soul of one leaving youth for a

higher state, but the charred soul of a quenched fire.

It was in those days of his middle fifties that he bought the whole block of ground, once far out in the sunflowers, a part of which was the little lot where the Haydens had lived — though only a few very old settlers remembered that — and on the block he put up the great Colonial mansion that is the town's pride to-day, a building more awful in its solemn lines than the courthouse, more splendid than the five-story hotel, more gorgeous than the Y. M. C. A., more impressive than even the ten-story First National Bank Building.

This Colonial mansion, set among great trees that came to the town from afar on flat cars and made the town gasp for weeks, is surrounded by beautiful gardens and by flowers the very names of which are strange to the population of New Raynham; but the thing about the house that really paralysed the town, rendering it speechless and setting it in its low place in the universe — far below the exalted Herringtons — was not the house itself, but a detail of its construction. To begin with, a contractor from Chicago did the work —

brought his workmen from Chicago, and the town never had so much as a glimpse of the plans.

However, that was not what reduced the town to a social pulp. The town was pulverised by the fact that as soon as the Chicago contractor began his work he put up a great board wall round the entire block, with signs marked Private Grounds — Keep Out! on the walls. After that what could the town do on Sunday afternoons and pleasant evenings when, according to all the traditions and customs of New Raynham a man is entitled to take his family and stroll critically through the rising home of his neighbour and locate the kitchen, the spare bedroom, the bathroom and the hired-girl's room, as a free fancy may dictate?

So the town circled the walls of the rising mansion much as Joshua circled the walls of Jericho, calling down mild anathemas on it; not knowing that within the pine-board walls the prosperous gentleman proprietor had built wire netting around a garden spot where a few old-fashioned flowers smiled in the great grounds wherein the builders built.

When the pine-board walls came down the house was finished and the gardens all laid out.

So, when the town went in — and it went in pell-mell as soon as the iron gates swung on their hinges between the high stone pillars — the town did not know that the old-fashioned garden, nestling in the formal gardens, so beautifully designed, was Mercy Hayden's garden, that had lived through all the years. But Elias Higginson, grizzled and gnarled by time and toil, rattling by the iron palings of the garden on his farm wagon, saw over the formal design into the old-fashioned heart of it, suckled his hard-boned hate and said to himself: "He's afraid of it; he dassent trample it out!"

What whim or fancy or fear made Herrington save the old garden one may not say; but there it grew, much as it had grown for nearly half a century — iris and peonies, lilacs and old-fashioned roses, asters and larkspurs, tall hollyhocks and zinnias, four-o'clocks, poppies, petunias and chrysanthemums — growing gradually less gorgeous, less fragrant, less deeply appealing to the senses of men as the flowering season waned and passed.

Man goes through his life's garden in something like such a procession; and all the exotics of pleasure bought and paid for, all the hothouse

flowers of luxury and artificial beauty, cannot bring back the breath of his May roses or the joy of his June poppies.

The years that followed the building of the new house saw the climax of Herrington's career. He went into railroad building and became president of the little New Raynham and Gulf Road. His status as president of even so unimportant a road as the N. R. & G. was such that New Raynham felt it to be sacrilege to call him old Charley; and he became Mr. Herrington.

Most of the people of New Raynham in the beginning of the second decade of the new century had never heard the story of Constance Hayden at all; but President Herrington, of the N. R. & G., knew that story. As the years weighed on him, the story remained in rigid detail, crazily out of drawing with the rest of his life; yet the white-haired, hard-visaged, cock-eyed old man, living in the great house — the sharp-voiced, querulous old man, who softened only to the little granddaughter who toddled beside him under the great elms in the gardens — went to work every morning at seven and toiled until dark. He did not appear like a man who had ever been touched by the ten-

der passion. "Mr. Herrington is Old Business," quoth the town. "Watch out if you ever catch him napping; he will wake up and bite a hole out of you!"

When he was in New Raynham Herrington's great motor car swung like a pendulum between his office and his home. Partly because he had the only limousine in town and partly because he was the town's capitalist, he was a marked figure as he sat all alone stooped over on the back seat of the car, whirling from his work to his meals and his bed. Romance seemed beyond his universe. At sixty he was as tight-skinned and dried-up as a man of eighty; but he was as vigorous and hard as a man in his forties.

There went with him in those days, whether he worked at home or travelled in state over his little railroad, a smart, trim, shrewd, silent young woman, in her thirties — Mrs. Ogler, his secretary or chief clerk, as the railroad people called her. The town accounted Mrs. Ogler a wonder. A myth grew up round her — as to the things she knew and as to the things she could do and did. It was said that Mrs. Ogler knew every tie on every railroad Mr. Herrington had built;

that she drew his contracts and kept all his many businesses at her finger-ends. No half-servant, half-toy status had Nellie Ogler. She had arrived in the day and generation when women and men worked together out in the world as equals, as partners in achievements if not in profits.

Two men stenographers worked under her, one of them a faithful, scrubby-looking Airedale sort of person, being her husband by way of diversion. The clerks in the bank and the little railroad offices held Mrs. Ogler in great awe; but a little awe more or less did not spoil Mrs. Ogler. She went right on investing the fabulous salary that town gossip paid her in shirt waists that made the angels in the Boston Store weep.

Day after day and year after year her employer leaned more and more heavily on her. She was his memory in a score of business deals, and in certain ways she was his judgment. A cheerful, normal, wholesome sort of person she was; and perhaps her continued presence gave Herrington some vague idea of what he had missed in life. He knew he was too old to amass a first-class fortune; his little million did not satisfy him; yet he felt the money clutch of his fingers grow

clumsy. Life was drab and dreary, and he did not understand why.

Occasionally he caught himself using the wrong word and the wrong name, and doing absent-minded things. One day he sat drumming on the table while the woman worked. At length he spoke, clearing his throat:

"By the way, Nellie," he asked, looking at her intently, "what did I call you a moment ago?"

"Why, Connie. You often call me that — here lately."

Herrington's hands hovered over his desk, vainly trying to find something to pick up; and he dropped his eyes and said:

"Yes — Conway; that was the name of the clerk I had ten years ago. Nice boy!" he added, trying to smile.

The woman went on with her work, aware that the hard steely old eyes were on her; but she could not know that the thought had framed itself definitely in his mind that he was getting nothing out of life. As he looked at the woman — trim, clean, fresh, blooming, and sound to the core — he contrasted her with the false, kittenish, stale old woman who was his wife; and he realised with

a pang that Mrs. Ogler's husband was only a poor clerk.

Then some nerve or vein or fiber in his brain whisked itself out of gear and Herrington, in the realisation of his vast impotence, became obsessed.

PART III

There is a form of romantic dementia that attacks certain men in the early adolescence of their senility. It is hard to say whether or not this madness is more grotesque than the puppy love of early youth. Perhaps because age is supposed to be more circumspect than youth the capers of the old man and the young woman — for always he is enamoured of youth — are more fantastic than those of the young. Or perhaps in the earlier affairs of life both the man and the woman are dancing to the same tune in their blood and the dance is more seemly. But, whatever sets love's sweet song off-key in the calf love of early senility, something does jar it and all the world laughs.

There followed, like the course of a malady, a rising tide of what might be called a foxy folly in the Herrington breast; and this folly showed itself in a network of vast circumlocutions, meant to at-

tract the woman's personal attention. A score of times a day he managed to touch her foot or hand or arm; and he begged her pardon rather elaborately.

He began showering the two men stenographers in the office with cigars and baseball tickets, in order to pass a few boxes of candy and some flowers to Mrs. Ogler. And once, six months after the outbreak of his malady, she found a fifty-dollar bill in a box of chocolates. She pinned it to a letter in the morning's mail — a letter from one of his disagreeable creditors who was trying to settle a disputed bill — and left it on Mr. Herrington's desk, without a word.

When the woman let him see her annoyance at his silliness he sighed and moped, and made her work harder; but she could feel as the months passed that whatever madness was in his dull old head was growing. She could not know that it had its root in the man's barren life, his utter lack of any vital hold on things worth while. She saw only a capering old fool, making grotesque and horrible, something that in youth might have been beautiful. But Herrington, finding that the insanity of a life of getting had gone unbearably

stale, plunged into this fatuous make-believe of love with all the eager greed of his nature; and Mrs. Ogler saw that she must fight.

So she planned her campaign. She planned it one Sunday when the Herrington electric car offered for her use had twice gone home from her door empty. She said nothing to the Airedale, but on Monday morning sent him on an all-day errand to the construction department of the railroad.

When Herrington came swinging jauntily into the office, with his cock-eye softened as it turned upon her, Mrs. Ogler closed the door and sat opposite to him at the mahogany table. She met his calf-like leer without flinching. He opened his mouth as though to speak, when she interrupted him.

"This," she cried sharply, "is"—she paused—"nonsense!" And she repeated firmly: "Miserable nonsense! And what's more, Mr. Herrington, you've been too good to me in the past for me to stand it. Quit it! Quit it!" she cried.

Herrington started round the table. His eyes were glowing and his steps uncertain. She rose quickly and put her finger on the call button.

"None of that!" she snapped.

"Oh, Connie!" He stopped. His ear caught the word he had uttered. His mouth worked vainly. He spat out bitter ashes a moment and went on: "Oh, no — Nellie, I mean. You know what I mean — I mean you — you — you — Con—"

He was becoming distraught at his own words; but he went on excitedly:

"I want to give you — it's not just money — that's not it — not money; but larkspurs. No, no!" Horror blazed through his steely eyes frantically. There was no passion in his voice, but a miserable determination, cold and mad, as he slowly picked his words: "No — no! Oh, God — Oh, God, damn that wormwood on my tongue! It's — my " — he paused and took the next syllable — "name — my name," he repeated quickly. "Not just money I want to give you, Connie!"

At the sound of that name he let out a bleat of terror and wilted into his chair, with his hands nervously fingering his desk. A sudden and deep-planted resolution came to Herrington and he spoke again:

"I — I want — to — to — I'll sacrifice heaven and earth — all withered and faded —"

Again he seemed to be spitting ashes, appalled. The woman stared amazed at the old man. She was speechless for a moment, while dread overcame her loathing. He rose in a palsy of fright. A kind of infantile questioning agony spread over his face as he stood, with twitching mouth, choking down the words that kept swelling to his lips.

The man and woman, gazing dumbly at each other, saw that something bigger than a dotard's passion had come into the room. The woman stepped to a water bottle and handed him a drink. His weak hands carried it slowly to his quivering lips.

"Yes, Nellie — that's better. The larksp—" He shook his head hopelessly.

"You are ill, Mr. Herrington," answered the woman. He nodded. She stood in doubt a few seconds and then said: "But, of course, Mr. Herrington, I must not work here any longer. I've transferred myself in this letter." She pointed to a sheet of paper prepared on her desk. "I've issued an order transferring myself to the passenger department — if you don't mind. I

can help you — there — if you need help at any time; but I can't work here."

Again he nodded, afraid to speak. She turned to her desk and the old man sat trying his lips and mouth in whispers for a long time. At length he spoke.

"I'm all right now, Nellie — I believe."

"Very well, Mr. Herrington," replied the woman as her finger pressed the call button. In the seconds that elapsed before the door opened she added: "I'm sorry — very sorry for you, sir; but I'm going now." To the man who appeared with his notebook she continued: "There's nothing important in the mail but the request for Mr. Herrington's opinion on the Canal-tolls repeal from the Senate committee. Find the rate facts in file K — not the private file. Mr. Herrington will explain. I must be out of the office this morning."

The heads of departments who saw Mr. Herrington that summer remarked that he whispered to himself much of the time, and that he had a baffled uncertainty in his eyes. The traffic department said to the maintenance department: "The chief's not up to his top form these days." So his

subordinates took as much work away from him as they could, without letting him know it.

His silent habit seemed for a few months to be growing on him. When he spoke it was in monosyllables. He took to writing his orders on a tablet, which was ever before him, and with a grunt handing the written order to the proper clerk. He wrote fluently, and scribbled notes for his stenographers on the backs and tops and sides of the letters that came to his desk; but gradually, as the summer waned, his fear of speech lessened and he became less taciturn. He developed a ponderous habit of weighing every word before he uttered it; so men thought him exceedingly wise.

It was in September when an Interstate Commerce Commissioner, seeking to maintain the long-and-short-haul clause of the Federal law, came to New Raynham at the request of the Chamber of Commerce. The town was demanding its place on the commercial map. President Herrington, of the N. R. & G., was backing up the demand; for if the town could get the advantage of its geographical location it would mean better rates for his road. So he consented to

preside at the banquet given by the town to the investigating commissioner.

It was something like a day of triumph for Herrington, for he found himself backing a town enterprise in which his own self-interest lay; so he rose in his place at the head of the table on the night of the banquet with a renaissance of the Herrington grin on his face — the grin that had been drooping for nearly a decade.

The flutter of handclapping that greeted him died away, and he smiled his flinty, steely, cock-eyed smile at the banqueters. He felt secure; for he held in his hand, partly concealed, the card on which he had written his opening remarks. They stared at him in his familiar, exact handwriting, and he beamed.

“My pleasure,” he began, grinning cheerfully, “is all withered —”

The crowd, preparing for some light play of words, saw instead a white pall mantle Herrington's face as he stammered: “All fade —”

His eyes became fixed, as though he were looking at some specter. He stood for a second, stiff and panting, glaring at his unseen enemy. Then he sank down slowly into his chair, crying hoarsely:

"God! — God! — God!" and dropped his chin on his shirt-front. When they rushed to him he sat tight-lipped and grim. He would not answer their questions. So they led him from the hall. They put him in his car and telephoned to his home that he was ill.

The next day they took him to a Chicago nerve specialist. Herrington seemed more or less dazed at times and began to grow homesick. At the end of a week he was crying pitifully to go home.

At home they could not keep him in bed. He would wander through the grounds about his house like an old dog looking for something. He would not speak, and cried when the attendant stood too near him; but always he would go into that part of the grounds where the old-fashioned garden flourished. There they often found him staring dumbly at the old-fashioned flowers, apparently listening; and many times the attendant behind the lilac bush heard the old man whimper:

"The larkspurs are faded — all withered and faded! The larkspurs are faded — like me!"

This he would whisper over and over, and sigh. Then he would look round carefully, as though to find the larkspurs; but the larkspurs were gone.

On a fair, clear day in late autumn Elias Higginson was digging in a pit, up to his hips. Beside him was a rickety little old man, with a short breath and a misery in his back. The little old man from time to time leaned on his shovel and held one hand to his back; but Elias went on gouging the earth with his pick. Finally the silence became torturing beyond endurance and the little old man asked:

"Gravel under this?"

"Not for a while yet," responded Elias; and he did not look up.

Another long quarter of an hour passed, when Elias suddenly burst forth:

"I was a-thinkin' of him," he mused.

The little rickety man gasped slightly and responded:

"Oh, yes." And added: "What about that wireless you hear so much about? Do you suppose it's so — savin' of them boats — or just what you read in the papers?"

"Of him!" returned Elias doggedly.

The rickety man dropped his shovel for the hundredth time and picked it up wearily, but did not reply. At the end of a long pause, in which the

old man several times seemed about to go to work and then thought better of it, Elias burst forth:

" The last time I saw him he had his overcoat on out in the garden — her garden," he added, looking sharply at his companion.

The old man had fallen to work and was trying not to hear what was going on; but his curiosity got the better of his goose-flesh and he asked:

" Whose garden? " — and held his back for the reply.

" None o' your damn' business whose garden! His wife's garden — whose do you suppose? "

" Oh! " cut in the old man timidly; and Elias went on:

" Right there in her garden — same as that — where I seen him thirty-odd year ago — right there under the lilacs, shiverin' in his damn' hoss blanket of a overcoat — where I've crept up and peeked at him a damn' site hotter'n that! "

The little old man tried not to listen; but Elias, tearing the earth with his pick, cried angrily:

" And now he's colder'n ever! You bet he's cold enough now! "

The rickets in the old man set him a-flutter. He did not like the subject. Elias went on:

"As I was sayin', I passed the iron palin's of his garden and stopped to have a look at 'im. And they was a couple passin'—same as that—and she says to her man: 'A old man settin' in a autumn garden—how very poetical!' she says—same as that. An' they didn't know he was dotty, and I didn't tell 'em. They stopped by me and the man says: 'How very dignified he looks there in the autumn of life, amid the cosmos and buddin' chrysanthemums! How calm! How peaceful!'

"'When the storm of life is past,' she says—same as that—linin' out the hymn. And him a-settin' there, jabberin' under his breath and starin' at the flowerbed like a idjot!"

Elias stood aside to let the shoveler get at his dirt pile, and went on:

"But they never noticed it. They kept sayin', 'How poetic!'—and all that—'a old man, after the passion of life, settin' among the passionless flowers'—same as that! 'Oh, hell!' I says to myself and to them. I ast: 'Did you know this 'ere party?' And they says: 'No; who was he?' And I says: 'Well, you bet his name is Dennis now'—same as that!"

The old rickety man shuddered and whispered:
"Is the party's name Dennis?"

"You've said it," replied Elias, getting back to his work. He went on: "But when I first knowed him he went by another name. Folks used to call him Prince Charmin'—same as that."

He laughed and jeered. "Prince Charmin'! Even as a boy in school I knowed him—him a little boy; one o' them nicey, spicey boys—boughten sleds, boughten wagons, silver skates, spangle-topped boots—and all that. And then later on he come along, bustin' it up with me an' her—Prince Charmin'! Prince Charmin', with his pretty yaller-molasses moustache, and his tooth-pick shoes and dude breeches, skin-tight. Oh, I remember him! And me nothin' but a farmer boy with a buckboard; and him comin' sailin' up with his red-wheeled rig! Prince Charmin'! A hell of a Prince Charmin' he looked, all scrooched up in his overcoat there in her garden!"

"Whose garden?" asked the rickety man, confused, and to seem to be making talk.

Elias stopped to look at the dull eyes staring at him and the stupid face.

"His wife's—whose do you suppose?" He

went on digging for a time and then broke out again: "An' then pretty soon the man and the girl moved off; and this 'ere party I was speakin' of, he came —"

"The party?" queried the rickety man timidly, looking at the hole beneath him.

"Name's Dennis — same as that!" went on Elias. "He come shufflin' over to the palin' and the keeper come up beside him; and he stared at me, this here Prince Charmin' did, and he jabbers: 'The larkspurs is faded; all withered an' faded — all withered an' faded — like me!' — same as that. And he stares at me and don't know me; and then — and then" — the pick went hungrily into the earth again and again before Elias finished his sentence; he gave it a final bite of anger and went on — "an' then I knowed him — knowed my Prince Charmin' for all these thirty-odd years — same as that!

"For, I tell you, hidin' behind that same lilac bush, I heard her beggin' him and pleadin' with him; and as he slunk off like a houn' dog I heard her say them same words, same as that — same as that! And I've carried 'em in my head and he's carried 'em in his head — him and me. And why

I didn't kill him that night — kill him like the dog I knowed he was — same as that — there an' then, I never can tell; except that he was this here Prince Charmin' an' I was a farmer lyin' behind the lilacs, sufferin' like a dumb animal — for her."

"For who?" asked the old man, sitting on the dirt mound, cleaning his shovel with a stick.

"His wife — who do you suppose?" retorted Elias, glaring at the weak-minded man. "I thought I knowed, when he was gettin' the jury out of town — one at a time all those years — what was in his heart; and I thought I knowed why he always wanted me to leave — not 'at he ever heard of me and her, but because I got on that jury and tried to swing it agin him. So, Mr. Prince Charmin', that was the canker in your heart, eh? — same as that! An' you growed rich and you growed richer; and you got littler an' littler as you got things — as a body always does who lays up treasure in this earth — same as that!

"And you growed rich and you growed richer, and smaller and smaller, till yer little sodderin' pot of a hell inside you jest naturally burnt all the pith out of you, and you was a poetical-lookin'

old party, white-haired and leather-skinned, a-dyin' in a old-fashioned garden — a-dyin' at the top!" He stopped talking and bent to his pick in silence.

The rickety old man was afraid of the silence and said, as he mopped his forehead: "Hot work, ain't it?"

Elias dug on without replying.

"He goes to the gravel," remarked Elias as his pick struck the little stones. "We'll have to make 'im a concrete bed — nice and soft! Oh, you Charmin' Prince — you Prince Charmin', with your sodderin'-pot hell in your belly, how much have you bested me?"

"Meanin' the party?" questioned the rickety old man.

"Same as that!" rejoined Elias.

"Whose name is Dennis?" persisted the shoveller, looking furtively at the hole.

"Whose name is just that!" answered Elias as he buried his pick in the gravel.

The reporter for the New Raynham *Tribune* — owned by the N. R. & G. interests — was instructed by the managing editor to turn himself

loose on the funeral. So he told how the male choir sang *Crossing the Bar*, and *Lead, Kindly Light*; how two preachers prayed and another read the Scripture lesson; and printed in full the remarks of the bishop who delivered the eulogy.

At the end of the article the reporter appended a list of the railroad nobility from all over the West who had sent floral offerings, and he described some of the grander set pieces of hothouse flowers — gates ajar, broken columns, American Beauty palls, and other floral gewgaws; but he did not tell how empty and meaningless they are — those hothouse flowers. For, after all, it is the seasonal procession of the flowers of the field, growing gently and beautifully more serene and glorified as the season runs its course, that typify life.

THE GODS ARRIVE

PART I

ONCE upon a time — and the time was in the latter half of the first decade of the twentieth century, when strange new currents were running through the minds of men — in a certain small town in the Missouri Valley there sat at night in a smelly little newspaper office, rather poorly lighted, in the midst of a great throng that watched anxiously bulletins which flashed on a dead wall near by, a congressman.

The congressman was a pudgy, soft-handed, short-legged, thin-haired, pink-browed, clabber-jowled congressman, all swathed about as to his pod-like torso in a white vest, draped in a black frock coat. His name was Joel Ladgett. Joel Ladgett was the famous author of the Ladgett Bill. He sat rolling a dead cigar from one side of his loose, coarse mouth to the other, displaying a set of big, uneven teeth, badly battered by time. His jaw was coming unscrewed and was wabbling — almost visibly.

He held in his small, soft hands a yellow telegram and was reading it over and over, and over again. Outside, the contents of the telegram were shining on the dead wall; and in the summer breeze that played through the south window near the congressman he could hear the hum of the crowd. Somebody started a cheer; but the cheer was not successful and a faint clapping of hands died away fatuously.

The crowd knew that Mrs. Ladgett sat beside the congressman and his enemies banked the bonfires of their exultation. It was the first primary for choosing a congressman ever held in the district; and on that yellow slip of paper, containing the news from four of the seven counties of the district — there, impersonally and irrevocably — the finger of Fate spelled his defeat.

Defeat in a convention, with the tumult and the shouting of the captains, softens political death by dramatizing it. Often the vanquished has something of value to trade with the victor, and thus defeat is not complete. It may mean a slow-turning movement — as, say, to a Federal judgeship, or a receivership, or a state office. Or it may mean any of the thousand feather beds of

political consolation wherewith politicians ease their wounded and dying. But Congressman Ladgett's defeat at the primary was just cold, hard, miserable, unmitigated defeat. His hands sank trembling to his lap and his eyes filled, and he began trying to choke down the sobs that were rising in his heart.

The yellow sheet slipped to the floor. A lank, leathery man, who stood at attention, as a sort of courier or herald or outrider, near the Person, stooped to pick up the paper, and, as he rose, cried:

"That's what your pure democracy does to a man!" Rising, the lank courtier put a horny brown hand out, grasped the flabby little paw that dropped loosely from beneath the white vest; and the tall man said gently: "It's all right, Judge — it's all right. I'd lots rather go down with you than with —"

"Hiram!"

The man turned his face toward Mrs. Ladgett, a monumental person with three chins.

"Hiram," she repeated, "get a hack — Joel is tired; tell it to come to the alley; I don't want them to see him."

"The situation, madam, certainly does seem

—” Larson replied; but a look from the woman almost batted him out of the room.

No emotion shook the woman’s voice; yet her face was burning with wrath. She stood four-squared to whatever winds were blowing through her soul and gave orders like a ship’s captain in a gale. She looked at the tall man beside her and directed his eyes to the figure of the congressman. It had slumped. The face was hidden and the hands were clasped above the half-bald head; and the slanting shoulders were nervously pumping as the man wept. The woman said instantly:

“Keep the boys in the office away from him. Get the hack, quick!”

As Hiram Larson left the room Mrs. Ladgett locked the door behind him, and stood beside her husband. She did not whimper; nor did she touch him for a minute, but let his anguish spend itself. Then she said:

“Joel — Joel!” She found his hands. “Joel, you — you mustn’t — not here — not now!”

He raised his grief-riven face, all working with shame, and whimpered:

“But my life — my work! It’s all over! It’s all done!”

When the royal party was gone and the editor's room deserted, the crowd in the office, where the telegraph instrument was clicking out the details of his defeat, knew vaguely that Congressman Ladgett had in some way broken under the news. No one laughed; men were constrained. They shook their heads and sighed: "Too bad!"—even those who had contributed their votes to the landslide that overcame him.

The clicking instrument was bringing news of similar defeats from elsewhere in the state, and for months the primaries in other states had been mowing down men of the Ladgett type all over the nation. So the town about him was prepared for the overthrow of Ladgett. But though the congressman had seen his fellows drop before the grim reaper with the new weapon of democracy, he had imagined himself safe. He had his organisation—the strongest in the state—all bristling with postmasters under the control of Hiram Larson. The congressman also had the district attorney, the revenue collectors and their deputies, and the flunkies of the Federal court. He had Boyce Kilworth's money—all he needed of it; and the golden touch of the Kilworth money never

before had failed to do everything but raise the dead.

And then, of course — and the congressman did not minimise this point — there was his splendid record: his high place in the House, his great power with the Administration, the fame of the Ladgett Bill, and his place on The Committee. Even the congressman himself capitalised The Committee when he spoke of it, for it awed him with its power.

No matter how jauntily he pranced before the newer members across the floor of the House, with the red carnation in his coat lapel — the red carnation that set him apart and made him a member of the autocracy — The Committee, even to him, was a holy of holies, and his membership in it seemed to guarantee him against ordinary mortal mishaps. Politically he thought himself one of the deathless gods. He marvelled that a member of The Committee could eat and sleep and function physically as other men functioned; so, when the avalanche hit him, when the last definite telegram unmistakably revealed the truth to him, Congressman Ladgett's whole universe came crashing in. He could see no moral control of creation, no pur-

poseful guidance, no plan or scheme or direction to it.

It was a week before he could show himself to the town; but in that week the red corpuscles of hope began building round the congressman's heart. A thousand plans developed in his mind to bring back the seat he had lost. Two years, he thought, would give him a needed rest; but it would do more. The two years would prove to Boyce Kilworth that his tin mills could not run without a congressman. Rates, schedules, duties — specific and *ad valorem* — trailed through his head in endless procession as he built his life firmly into the structure of his country's future. For he saw life not as a moving picture on the reel; he saw it rather as a tableau set in the static calm of some Elysian Field, with the gods of things as they are in full dominion, and with congressmen and manufactures moving together in a common orbit of magnificence, dependent on each other, glorifying each other in heavenly harmony forever. So the hope in his heart charged his mind with an unshaken conviction that the universe required him in its divine economy.

As he sat in his rooms at the Astor House,

where Hiram Larson was the host, and there, rearranging to his purpose the fragments about him of the wreck of matter, he read the press clippings that came flooding in on him from the Clipping Bureau. Hiram used to come to the royal bed-chamber betimes, and, after reviewing what he referred to as the Situation for an hour, he would slip out of the pile of newspaper cuttings those which indicated in a rather definite way that the congressman's district had shown itself stark mad, in retiring such a distinguished statesman. And these clippings the cupbearer of Parnassus would read exultingly on the streets of New Raynham to such gross cattle as he thought might be prodded to repent of their ruthless conduct; but Hiram never was able to report any change in the Situation. The Situation always was grave with Hiram — grave or acute.

Finally Mrs. Ladgett decided that the congressman should appear on Constitution Street, in the marts of trade, where the author of the Ladgett Bill was used to the adulation of the multitude. He made his public appearance in his long coat, his white vest, his immaculately creased trousers, his high hat. For twenty years in this regalia

he had swept the town before him as the wind bends the grainfield. Yet that first day his regalia did not seem to be achieving all it should have achieved. Men were patronizingly polite; and that cut him. And some men, whom he knew were lying to him, professed sympathy; and that angered him.

Because Mrs. Ladgett had insisted that he go to the bank, he went; though he knew his overdraft was wide and deep, and that his past-due paper was baled in a withered bundle. Boyce Kilworth, of the Traders National, for thirty years had been a sort of foster Providence to the congressman, controlling his destinies at home and, through New York channels, guiding his Washington career. In greeting the Judge, Kilworth looked up from his interest book gloomily, then took the Judge into the back room of the bank and gave him the bank's third degree for delinquents. He had heard Kilworth give others that third degree; but it was a new thing to the Judge to hear it visited on his own head. It rumbled his white vest, disheveled his hair, and disorganised his fundamental faith in the essential goodness of great riches, as such. And that faith was all he

had left in a shattered universe whereon to pin his sanity.

The congressman left Boyce Kilworth's bank dazed, like a new soul in purgatory. That the dogs in the hustings might turn on him, he had come to believe, was largely to his credit. He accounted it a virtue that he had been picked for a high martyrdom to his principles. Greece and Rome furnished countless examples of the treachery of the rabble. But that Boyce Kilworth, who was of the divine cult and of a divinity of pure gold higher than that in which mere congressmen moved, that Boyce Kilworth should snarl at his friend and should bicker at the defeat, that he should find Boyce Kilworth's gilding rubbing off and disclosing brass — that indeed was real disillusion.

But his faith in the political immortality of the demi-gods of his Parnassus was unshaken. He knew in his soul that Boyce Kilworth's tin mill would shrivel under the blighting curse of the jealous divinities if there was no Ladgett in Washington to intercede for the mill; and, though he was pained — even deeply hurt — at the ingratitude of Kilworth, still, he knew that in the order of

things in his universe Kilworth would be brought to see his error and retrace his steps.

Yet, as the Judge turned out of Constitution Street into a shady elm-covered avenue and walked sadly to the Astor House — not the best hotel in New Raynham by any means, but one where for many years he had been welcome without money and without price for the glory that he shed there — as he walked he wondered and wondered and wondered at the perfidy of the gods, which was so uncomfortably like the baseness of man! Only in the mad tragedies of Euripides could he find any counterpart of this baseness of the divinities, such as he had seen in Kilworth.

He hesitated to go to Mrs. Ladgett, who had packed him up and sent him to Constitution Street as a Spartan mother might throw her offspring on the rocks. So he gave audience first to Hiram Larson, the cup-bearer. In a little cubby-hole behind the high pine desk, whereon rested the dog-eared hotel register, Ladgett and his lieutenant retired as to a sibylline cave; and there the congressman gave out this oracle:

“Hiram, have I or have I not deserved of the Fates a kindlier portion than they have dealt me?”

He put one hand behind him, pointed an oratorical finger at the lank hotel keeper, wrinkled his mottled pink brow until his eyebrows all but met, and glared at Hiram as though he was one of the Fates; and then the congressman proceeded to break the dam of his restraint:

“Hiram, boy and man for sixty-five years my goings in and comings out have been an open book. Did I desire an education? Yes. Well, who paid for it? Who? I ask. Joel Ladgett taught school and paid for it; and none of your flimsy fads and frills were in that education. Greek — hard beautiful Greek — and elegant Latin, and deep mathematics, and subtle philosophy. And when I came home and studied law here in Old Man Herrington’s law office, I ask you, who was the youngest county attorney ever elected in Lincoln County? Who? Well, I was. I was!

“And who was it that stood by Boyce Kilworth in the county attorney’s office when they were clamouring to send him to the penitentiary for stuffing the ballot box? You know! You know! And who, as district judge of a district as large as a New England State — who shielded Boyce Kilworth from the clamour of the mob that would

have sent him up for fee grabbing as county treasurer, if it was not I myself? I defy you or any other man to tell me who it was!"

The Judge was strutting up and down the little cave of a room, with his hands in his trousers pockets, wagging his head vigorously in his best manner, defying some hypothetical adversary.

"When I went into politics," he began again, taking a new tack, "I knew the game. I knew one must rise by his own efforts — and I rose. It was my business to rise and I kept rising. I made one office get me another. And no other man in this State ever played a smoother game than I played — if I do say it. They were my own offices. No man can say he ever made Joel Ladgett. Joel Ladgett had no faith in the rabble; he didn't fool himself into thinking the rabble would appreciate what he did. He didn't fawn on 'em and pretend he was in office to serve 'em.

"Joel Ladgett, Hiram Larson, was in office to rise, and keep rising; and now, when the Huns and Vandals come, overwhelming the city, Joel Ladgett does not propose to run. Joel Ladgett will sit on the porch of his house in his vestments of office — a Roman noble, garbed in all the in-

signia of his rank. And let the Goths do their worst! ”

That figure pleased him. And, though there was much more of his speech to Hiram, the cup-bearer, that day, his picture of himself grandly sitting under the marble pillars of a decaying republic while the barbarians ravaged his country, so gripped the Judge's imagination that he resolved never to appear on Constitution Street without his white vest and the carnation at his coat lapel, which marked his high calling as a Roman patriarch.

It was while the Judge was ruminating thus in silence amid the debris of our institutions that Hiram mysteriously beckoned the waiting Mrs. Ladgett into the darkness of a linen closet and confided to her, in a high-pressure whisper, that the Situation was becoming “acute.”

The day following Judge Ladgett's interview with Boyce Kilworth the banker sent his wife round to call on Mrs. Ladgett. And the call roiled the waters of Mrs. Ladgett's soul. For of old it was known in the town that whenever Boyce Kilworth had reason to hate himself for a particularly despicable trick it was his practice to send his meek, soft-voiced wife to call on the victim.

She was known as Boyce's First Aid — not that she aided in any sense. It was her habit to chirp naively through her call about nothing at all, and to get up and leave a whole pack of cards rather shyly; then fly happily away on the next errand of mercy to deposit her peace tablets elsewhere. When she called on Mrs. Ladgett, at the Astor House, Mrs. Kilworth sat with her gloved hands carefully folded in her lap and listened meekly to the unctuous patronge of the grand dame.

"Of course, Mrs. Kilworth," quoth the consort, sitting bolt upright in purple satin, and with all her false hair set on her wrinkled front, giving her the appearance of an animated heathen temple — "of course, Mrs. Kilworth, you cannot understand that they have let in chaos at Washington. It is not only the Judge they have retired — temporarily, of course — but the other strong men of the House; the government, in fact. The government has fallen — only a shell remains."

Mrs. Kilworth smiled up sweetly from under her white hair, falling in gentle waves on her placid forehead, and replied:

"Of course! Isn't it unfortunate?"

"Unfortunate! Unfortunate!" rumbled Mrs.

Ladgett. "Why, woman — is that the word to use about the fall of your country? I have just said it is chaos — Chaos! They have let in chaos; and the Judge feels it a patriotic duty to hurry right back to Washington — session or no session — to do what he can to prepare the country against its ruin. Ah, madam" — this with a shake of the head that set the temple lights of beads on the lower levels to trembling as in an earthquake — "you little dream what it means to this government to lose the guiding hands that have kept it from socialism and anarchy!"

But the time had come when the impulse to deposit her cards was burning unquenchably in Mrs. Kilworth, and she rose and flitted away, carrying a vague impression with her that Mrs. Ladgett was booming on interminably. And ten days after the primary, when the Ladgetts moved majestically back on Washington, Mrs. Kilworth had a curious notion that they were going back to do something or other to chaos.

It was a beautiful world into which the Ladgetts came when they finally returned to New Raynham from Washington — and a happy world, too, as worlds go. Here were miles of wide, elm-shaded

streets, and hundreds of acres of bluegrass, whereon children pastured; and flowers grew in little gardens behind comfortable homes. Youths and maidens met and played the little comedies of their courtships simply and gayly, without thought of class or caste; and the natural selection of the human creature was going on as Utopians for many hopeless ages dreamed it should go. Riches were distributed more fairly than ever dreamers had known them to be in any other age in the world, and life was full of joy.

If they had but looked for it the Ladgetts could have found joy, too, in seeing the flower of many a world-old dream fruiting so sweetly. But the Judge saw only the wreck of the order on which he had built his life's faith; and the Roman matron who stood beside him saw only chaos. Their eyes were focused on a universe running wild; and they had no eyes for the loving hand of God, which was beckoning through all the streets, through all the homes, through all the hearts and lives of the town, to an age-long human vision achieved — to a glimpse of a justice that might some day be realised by all men.

So it was a hard, hopeless, dreary sky that

gloomed over the Ladgetts when they settled, temporarily, of course, into their old apartments — two bedrooms, with a tin bathtub in a closet between them — in the Astor House. They had not accumulated a stick of furniture during their twenty years in Congress, and the New Raynham home that they had built in the seventies, long before had been taken for its mortgage and the taxes.

However, because credits in the stores of the town were easy for the nobility, and the Judge kept the flag of his hopes floating, for a year he managed to put up the outward show of prosperity. Always the white vest, the tail coat, the high hat, the red carnation, insignia of his nobility; always the grand manner — even in buying his cigars on credit; always the air that the author of the Ladgett Bill was stooping to dwell on a mortal plane; always the atmosphere of the grandeur that was Rome — pervaded him. He made no new friends; when he came out of his lofty dream to speak at a formal occasion, the audience was made to feel that the author of the Ladgett Bill was still in public life.

Hiram Larson always had been his campaign

manager; always had spoken for the Judge, translating the oracles into the language of the people. Hiram continued at his post; and the Judge's casual appearances on Constitution Street during his first year of exile seemed to partake something of the nature of a pageant, so far removed was he from his fellows.

"He wears," said Colonel Longford one afternoon to Toney Delaney, as they sat in the back room of Boyce Kilworth's bank watching the Judge out skirmishing for a cigar—"He wears the hue

— *like that when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.*"

"'Tis the procession of the bleedin' heart," returned Delaney. "And I wonder," he mused on, "whether the Judge really knows it's all over for him! He can't come back. Why, all the chief's money here wouldn't galvanize him! And, what's more, the chief's tied up the new man so tight he can't breathe."

The miserly drib of a pension which the Judge received for his service in an Indian war in the late sixties Mrs. Ladgett appropriated to bedeck

herself in a manner befitting her station as wife of the author of the Ladgett Bill. She referred to this pension as "our income," and precious little did Joel get to apply on Hiram Larson's rising account. It was her habit to commandeer periodically one of the three musty hacks in the town and call in regal pomp on such official families as she considered required calls from her.

On these occasions she would tell, with bated whispers, of the responsibilities at Washington that almost broke her husband's body and soul. She was careful to exhibit an indifferent view of the senators, a nicely restrained contempt for the Cabinet Members, and to withhold her loathing of the President's general incompetency only by main strength and awkwardness. But for Joel Ladgett — Mrs. Ladgett calmly left New Raynham to freeze with horror at the thought of what would have happened to a bleeding country if it had not been for the Judge.

When some of her friends suggested that she should join the Woman's Research Club, Mrs. Ladgett rested her arms proudly over her ample fortifications and smiled benignly and replied:

"I shall avail myself of the opportunity to visit

your club — sometimes. But ”— here she paused — “naturally for so short a time I can scarcely be expected to take an active part; I should hardly get into next year’s work before the Judge would no longer feel the need of the rest he is taking and would be back in the harness again — and we shall be in Washington.”

It was in those decadent days of the republic that Mrs. Ladgett began livening up the interest in her Thursday afternoons by telling the ladies — mostly oldish ladies of an unfashionable cult — of the temptations that beset public men in Washington. Such a seamy side did she turn to the ladies; such dreadful court secrets did she disclose; such an insight did she give her salon into the wicked life of the capital — that Elsie Barnes, the society editor of the *Globe*, once said:

“Charley ”— speaking on the office square and under the Masonic pledge of secrecy which that solemn obligation put on the youth before her — “Charley, if I could just get the right to publish what she reels off there at her Thursday afternoons, under some such a title as *The Secret Memoirs of a Lady Dragoness in the Court of Theodore I*, I could make our fortunes.”

It was not Mrs. Ladgett's habit to paint a halo of virtue round the thin hair on the Judge's pink head; but she gave the strong impression that she had snatched him from the burning pit and held him spotless only by her own splendid qualities of heart and mind. She was not, however, the woman to say so!

Thus, as the Ladgetts' first year away from Washington went by, the town said that the dragoness was getting used to her chains. But people did not know how fiercely she snapped at those chains. It was in January following their return from Washington that Mrs. Ladgett breathed fire into the Judge's soul and sent him out, with the weapon of his trembling hopes, to release her from her captivity and take her to the heights where she was wont to dwell.

It was one thing to buckle on the Judge's armour and send him valiantly into Constitution Street; but, alas, it was quite another thing for the Judge to storm and retake the Kilworth fortress. As the Judge went into the marble and tiled splendour of the outer offices he clicked his heels as gayly as he could — for one whose legs seemed water beneath him — and swung as jauntily as pos-

sible past Boyce Kilworth's desk into the back room, where all the dire deeds of the bank were done. In a few moments Kilworth followed the Judge and found him seated at the table where in times before the two had often held high conference. Kilworth remained standing. He held his fountain pen impatiently in his hand and asked quickly:

"Well, Judge?"

"I have come," answered Judge Ladgett — trying vainly to get back into the old imperious manner that came to him naturally as a member of The Committee and as the author of the Ladgett Bill — "I have come," he repeated, to get a good start, "to talk over our plans for my campaign — this spring."

"That's good — that's good!" cut in Kilworth, still holding his pen, and jingling his keys and his silver with his other hand in his trousers pocket. "By the way, what are you running for now, Judge?"

The Judge met the keen black eyes of the banker, and the old eyes dropped. Kilworth felt that the worst was over. The Judge's head and eyes came up in a moment and he replied: "You

know very well what I'm running for, sir! What should I be running for but Congress?"

"All right, Judge — go ahead. It's a free country. But I've had to obligate myself to the present incumbent. You know the story of the appointment of the new United States marshal. I had to have him. And, anyway, I'm lined up that way now, Judge."

Kilworth put the least shade of kindness — or maybe it was self-pity — into the last sentence. He stood towering over the Judge and saw suddenly come into the old frame a stiffening of purpose; and an instant later the Judge was on his feet.

"And you," cried the Judge passionately, "you tie up" — he paused and repeated — "you tie up with him! With him? With anarchy, with socialism, with the enemies of the Constitution — just for a Federal marshal to herd round your serfs down there at the tin plant and keep 'em down! You betray your country for a piece of pie?" His face was red and his voice charged with wrath. "You — you who would be doing your time still in the penitentiary if it wasn't for me! You! You!"

He was glaring at the banker when Kilworth sneered: "Get off your high horse! A man's got to be practical, hasn't he? Anyway, I'm busy."

Kilworth turned to go. The Judge's passion was waning and he cried:

"Look here, Boyce; can't you listen to reason? Does a stable government mean nothing to you?" He stood pleading rather pitifully as the banker stopped but did not turn.

Kilworth answered harshly:

"No use talking, Judge; I'm all tied up. I'm sorry; but I can't help you."

He was gone a moment later. The Judge picked up his hat and his gloves — newly cleaned, as a part of his burnished armour, by his wife. He stood for a moment looking out of the window, and then walked through Kilworth's room into the corridor of the bank, without speaking, and with what pride he could rouse from a broken heart.

He countermarched about the outside of the frowning fortress he could not storm and made a sad detour before going to the castle, where the pining prisoner lay in the dungeon of the Astor House. He talked a long footless hour with

Hiram, went over every county in the district, postmaster by postmaster, precinct by precinct, town by town; but, as for conclusions, Hiram, after the manner of his cult and caste, had few to offer. He looked wise, made certain familiar grimaces to indicate that he was thinking deeply, and, in the end, would venture nothing more definite than that the Situation seemed very grave — acute, in fact! At the end of the hour the defeated knight in armour shuffled wearily and rather stiffly, in the clotted garments of his downfall, up the stairs to break the news to the captive in her shackles. And she — the dragoness — alas! when she took the burnished armour off her knight, being wise and exceedingly kind in her innermost heart, knew full well that the armour never could go on again.

PART II

The Judge tried vainly for a month or two to rouse some enthusiasm for his candidacy in the district. Hiram Larson went through a rather ponderous ritual of giving out interviews to the effect that the Judge might run again if his friends insisted. One or two, perhaps altogether half a dozen, patriots in post offices wrote letters to the

papers demanding that the Judge should run and restore the government of the fathers; but the movement got no farther.

And in the spring the Judge swung a new tin lawyer's sign to the breeze. He moved a rickety old walnut desk into an insurance man's shabby office, upstairs in a by-street, and took up the practice of law; but he had not been on his feet in a courtroom for thirty years. The law had grown away from him and his youthful practice was scattered. He had no law books, and the whole business of law had changed so since he had practised in the courts that he was sadly adrift in it. Rarely did a client climb his stairs — except the old soldiers who puffed up, with their tangled pension cases, which he was supposed to untangle free of charge.

A rather dreary and distinctly dingy life lived this little tin god, forever beleaguered in New Raynham. For a time he wrote letters to his grand friends in Washington and kept in touch with the life of which he had been a part; but their letters to him grew shorter, and sometimes he got form letters, which he knew were signed and — alas! — composed by their clerks. So it came to

him that the lost Alsace for which he was eating his heart out was a vast sham. They were all frauds down there, he told Hiram. The coming of the Gauls had sapped their courage and they were truckling to the mob.

"Are they blind?" he would demand fiercely of Hiram on hot afternoons, when he saw no reason for inhabiting his dusty office and having to live with a man to whom he owed a year's office rent — "are they blind to the follies that wrought the downfall of Greece and Rome? Can't they see that these new fads are old perils? What are all these frills of popular government but the rise of the Grecian demagogues? And these low abasements to labour — what are they but the soup kitchens of Rome and the idiocy of the agrarian movements? Why can't men read history? And why do we forget the principles of the fathers and besot ourselves with demagogy!"

And Hiram, in his wisdom, would pull a wry face and shake a doubtful, silent head over the grave Situation.

A time came when the white vest had lost its pristine splendour. It was often spotted and poorly cleaned with gasoline; then washed in the

tin bathtub and badly ironed. Money was so scarce with the Ladgetts that a dollar became a family institution before it was spent. It was known as "that dollar," and then as "that quarter"—and finally, "that nickel."

The Retailers' Association — another of those modern devices that were bleeding the noblest blood of New Raynham white by making the nobility pay cash — had entered the Ladgetts in their fraud book. They were marked FFz; and when the Judge desired to smoke he had to saunter behind the counter in the office of the Astor House — sometimes when Hiram was there and the Situation was grave, and sometimes when he was not there and the Situation was less acute — and take a cigar. No Constitution Street store would sell to the Judge without the cash. The business of being a Roman lictor and staring the Gauls out of countenance, or of dying that France might live, was a sad and discouraging business.

Sometimes — perhaps on circus days, or when lodge conventions were meeting in the town, or when a club or society was filling the Astor House for a few brief hours — the Judge, as a creature of some higher order among mortals, would ap-

pear behind the counter in the office, obviously stooping to the lower classes as Alfred ate the oat loaf, and would assign guests to their rooms; take their money with conspicuous playfulness; or in something like the manner of a dancing elephant he would even take ice water to their rooms or bow them into the dining room.

It had been over a year since Mrs. Ladgett had begun to help Mrs. Larson in the kitchen at rush times and to slip into the bedrooms on her floor, making the beds, half surreptitiously, half apologetically — like some grand griffin caught violating a garbage can!

When he went to the newspaper office in the afternoons to get the news of the day the Judge was still able to rise to his heights — to the real Parnassus, where he had shone with the glittering divinities. Our Press report is a pony report of only three thousand words — a dignified bulletin service; but still a bulletin service. At first the Judge used to sit by the pale youth who edited the briefed copy that came from the telegraph instrument, and trust — with the wistful eyes of a hungry dog — to the young man's dropping a skin or a bone of news from the scant feast we were enjoying.

A line from Washington meant so much to the Judge that he had to share it with the youth at the desk. And when the Judge expanded the inner meaning of the line, it was the habit of the youth to write out what the Judge had said and share the wider knowledge with the readers of the paper. So it happened that the Judge became an office institution.

One afternoon the story came across the young man's desk of the overthrow of the regulars in the National House of Representatives. They were the cohorts of the Judge's own Roman legion, and the Speaker was their proconsul. It was a meagre story as it came, rather undramatic and colourless; but when the Judge visualised it, and the pale youth had written it, he pictured the determined, white-visaged regulars huddled in a corner of the House like fighting rats, with the cowardly majority hectoring the intrepid minority, and with the blood of the martyrs coursing through their hearts.

The Judge saw, and he made the youth at the desk see in spite of himself, the fine fettle and gorgeous pluck of the little band that rallied about the great proconsul, who was beaten down and overwhelmed.

When the youth had finished writing the story, however, he looked up and saw the Judge still holding the original yellow sheet from the telegraph instrument in his trembling hands. Tear stains smudged the mottled, unshaved old face; and as the Judge met the young eyes the husky old voice spoke:

“Oh, my Leonidas — my fallen Leonidas! How long shall we wait for some Thermopylæ to make thy death immortal?”

Whereupon he rose, snapped his spectacles into their case, and toddled out of the office. He came back the next morning bright and early to get a look at the morning papers; but his heart was never the same after the overthrow of the Speaker. He never smiled again on politics. He looked out on the world round him as one from a fortified citadel looks into a captive plain filled with the dead, the mad and the invaders.

Little by little, as this creed or that theory had been enacted into law, or had been made a part of the common life of the people about him, his cronies in Washington had accepted the new order established and had taken to worshipping it as a part of the fixed destiny of the race. But the

Judge never surrendered. At evening he saw the sun setting in his country's blood, and at dawn he watched for the invasion of the Parthians and Vandals of a heathen democracy.

The time came when he could no longer pretend to have a law office. The insurance man, who had borne with him for years without rent, finally moved to a smaller office to get rid of the Judge; so he took to spending more and more time in the newspaper office. We gave him a chair at a desk where the exchanges were tumbled; and, because he liked to have the papers as quickly as the mails brought them, we gave him a leather pouch and made it a part of his duty to go for the mails. He used to shuffle moodily along the streets in his frayed coat, shiny trousers and dirty white vest, head down, brooding over the wrongs of the republic. Coming back to his chair, he would sit for hours browsing through the newspapers, taking a kind of fiendish pleasure in torturing himself with the radical papers, gloating terribly as he read the socialist press, and mortifying his flesh with an occasional anarchist weekly.

Patriotism with the Judge was a primal emo-

tion. And to him patriotism meant the order that was — the good old times; the Constitution of the Fathers; the divine right of capital to rule. As he hated kings, so he hated democracy; and the rising intelligence of the middle classes, which demanded recognition in the government, seemed to the Judge the return of the jungle into a well-ordered garden of life.

So, when his state gave the ballot to women, Cæsar's great heart broke. The Judge had tried to make some speeches against it, but the rabble hooted him, and the fund to pay his expenses was meagre; so, early in the campaign he came home to view with what equanimity he could muster the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds. For a week after the election he kept off the streets. Then one day he toddled to the newspaper office and picked up — not the goading journals that had excited his wrath before the fall of man, but, instead, he reached for an old reliable, safe and sane organ of the Bourbons, which had been his strength in ages past.

The Judge felt that there was a firm rock to which he could cling; but he forgot — if he ever

knew — that newspapers find their way into homes largely on the woman's dictum, and that editors — even Bourbon editors — are quick to observe on which side their bread is buttered. So, in running down the editorial column of the paper that he had come to regard as the last palladium of his liberties, the Judge's eye found this:

“And what steam, electricity and capital did for the material development of the nineteenth century, we may expect the conscience of an enlightened womanhood to do for the spiritual advancement that is before us as our problem in the establishment of justice in the twentieth century.”

Slowly he put the poison from his quivering lips. He folded the sheet carefully and sat looking dazed and helpless as he struggled impotently with the shame and rage that crackled within him. The busy young men in the room clicked away at their typewriters; and the telegraph instrument chirped its song — a cricket on the hearth of the planet. Only the society editor in the next room, holding her hands in puzzled anxiety, trying to recall whether Mrs. Gregory Nixon had worn her black velvet or her orange satin at her dinner the night

before — only Elsie Barnes could see the emotional tumult that was shattering the old man's heart. And even she did not appreciate how deeply he was stirred. Suddenly he rose, as though addressing some specter chairman, and cried:

“Conscience, gentlemen! Justice, gentlemen! Spiritual advancement, gentlemen! My God! Oh, my God! Are these things to be dragged in the mire of politics? Lord! Lord! Has reason fled to brutish beasts?”

The young men looked up, startled, from their machines. But the old man, like Pontius Pilate after asking his fateful question, did not wait for the answer, but shuffled out of the room.

At the general election following the victory of the women, New Raynham was stirred to its depths; matters of vast moment were involved in the election of a county commissioner, and incidentally a President, a congressman and a state ticket. So lines in the town were taut.

A week before the registration books closed it was found that the Judge had not registered. Somebody spoke to Hiram Larson about the Judge's oversight and Hiram passed the word on

to the Judge, who nodded and said nothing. Four days passed and still the Judge had not enrolled as a voter. The women had enrolled Mrs. Ladgett early in the campaign. Hiram again reminded the Judge that his name was not on the books, and again the Judge nodded.

On the seventh day Hiram and Toney Delaney and Colonel Longford, as a board of strategy, took charge of the Judge. It was late in the afternoon when the Colonel had laboriously and rather deviously herded and manœuvred the Judge to a point where the two stood in front of the city hall and the Colonel remarked casually:

“Better step in and register, Judge!” And he offered Judge Ladgett a cigar.

The backs of many women who were registering at the last hour were seen through the open window and the shrill rasp of female voices tore the Judge's nerves.

“Look in there — just look in there, Jack Longford! A pink tea party — a bridge-whist joint — a miserable millinery opening! No, Jack — no! You may do it; you may sully your manhood by voting with that she-bedlam — that — that —”

He could not finish the sentence, but choked in

emotion, and took the Colonel's arm and tried to move away. But the Colonel was obdurate. He held the Judge and cried:

"But, Joel — Joel, my boy — your vote? Your vote?"

The two old men stood looking vainly into each other's eyes — the Colonel pleading; the Judge in wrath and shame that shook his head as in a palsy. It was the Judge who found voice; but his voice was cracked with rage as he shook his old head in defiance.

"Vote! Vote!" he repeated. "What's one honest vote more or less in a madhouse? Jack, I've cast my last vote!"

He turned sharply, broke away from the Colonel and stalked down the street alone, with what dignity his years would grant him on his unsure feet. A moment later Hiram and Toney Delaney appeared from round a corner, where they had been in waiting; and the Colonel, pointing to the wrathful, shuffling little figure trudging down the street, turned a sad face skyward and bellowed his emotions in his fine old voice:

*"For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings."*

Toney Delaney did not laugh — for once in his life; but Hiram, nodding his head like a mechanical toy, and then shaking it, scowled and admitted, as one keeping back the meat of the truth and casting out a bone:

“Colonel”—Hiram paused—“Colonel, the Situation is certainly grave!”

The passing years were taking the Judge into his early seventies, trimming the sagging paunch that held his little round stomach, cutting away the fat from his jowls, deepening the wrinkles in his forehead. He came to have a lean, frowsy look, more or less unshaved; waxy as to skin and red as to eyelids.

The year that saw a tide of reaction registered in the elections found the Judge scarcely able to muster a decent-looking suit of clothes for the banquet that the Old Guard held in the grandest hotel in New Raynham. Not that there was much to celebrate in the way of results achieved in his state; for there popular clamour still held the man who had the loaves and fishes to distribute, and there was no hope for the Judge from those who lent an ear to popular clamour. But in other states the outlook was better. Some of his old congressional

colleagues were slipping back into governorships; and one who had served with the Judge on The Committee was the orator of the day at the Old Guard's celebration.

So the Judge, in his frayed garments, from which the nap had long since been brushed; in his freshly washed white vest, all tucked in at the back to fit his shrinking paunch; with his hair cut — a new hair-cut of great price, namely, a quarter — showing the two lean arteries at the back of his neck, the Judge came home from the banquet a giant refreshed.

The plan to name and elect one of the Judge's old cronies as President, and restore forever the order that was, put iron into the old soul of the broken demi-god; for a President could scatter the powers of darkness and bring back the days of duties, specific and *ad valorem* — wherein congressmen and tinmakers walked together in majesty on the heights. It was a beautiful vision, and it warmed the Judge's old heart to a recrudescence of youth. He had agreed to raise his county's share of the campaign fund that was to be used as a sinew of war in the state to fight against the hated Parthians of popular clamour.

For a day or two after the Feast of Belshazzar he sat pondering at his desk in the exchange room of the newspaper office, writing down names, assessing tentative sums after the names, and building vain castles of power and glory on the hopes he had of making his assessments a reality. Then for a day or two the place that knew the Judge knew him only intermittently. The reporters brought in the news that he was out collecting; they also declared that he was not collecting much. And even Boyce Kilworth seemed to be turning an ear to popular clamour and gave the Judge a dollar where he had expected to get a hundred.

A week passed; we heard the Judge rattling two dollars against a third as he sat at his desk in the office, and one morning he toddled in unsteadily, a trifle late. It was the morning when the state convention of the Woman's Federation was gathering in the town. He seemed feeble and preoccupied. He went over and over his assessment list and was forever looking up to see who entered the office.

An hour before the noon mails were due he walked cautiously to the business office, put down three silver dollars and a ten-dollar bill, and asked the man at the counter to get him a draft for thir-

teen dollars, payable to the treasurer of the Constitutional Club, at the Capital. In due course he wrote his letter, inclosed his draft and went to the post office to wait for the mail.

While he was gone Hiram Larson came into the office looking for the Judge. Hiram explained rather foolishly that a ten-dollar bill had dropped out of his counter drawer on the floor of the office that morning and he was wondering whether the Judge had seen it. Hiram wrote out a "lost" advertisement and left it, saying:

"Tell the Judge, if he hasn't seen it, to have this put in the paper. You know there's a chance that the bill may have been swept out under some of the petticoats onto the sidewalk, and somebody might have picked it up; for I know it was there at half past nine — I counted the cash myself then. And, of course, the Judge may have picked it up and put it somewhere — there's that."

After Hiram had gone, the Judge came sifting in. His leather pouch was stuffed with papers and in his fingers he held a letter. Before he could open the letter, the editor handed the old man the advertisement. He flushed when he read it and shook his head, and the advertisement took

its course. Then he opened his letter. It was from his friend and former colleague on The Committee, who, as orator of the day, had met the Judge at the rally of the Old Guards.

The letter was written on the embossed stationery of the state — a rich state, lying to the eastward. It began affectionately: "Dear old Joel!" and indicated between the lines that the heart of the man who had spoken at the Old Guards' rally had been touched by the faded, broken figure who had edged about the crowd at the banquet. The letter closed with these words:

"And now, my dear Joe, here is something I can do for you: I have a contingent fund voted by the legislature to defend the various measures of popular government recently passed by our people at the polls from certain attacks in the courts. I find I can appropriate five hundred dollars of this sum to you for associating with the attorneys of this state. See inclosed sheet for specific suits. I realise that you don't altogether agree with the spirit of these new measures; but a lawyer must take whatever business comes to his office." And then, after a few personal words, the letter closed.

Judge Joel Ladgett sat before the unopened ex-

changes for a long time. His hands were clasped and his thin little body swayed as in a breeze. He rose and looked out of the window, and read and reread the letter. Then he moved unsteadily over to the desk of the editor and put the letter before him without a word. When he had read the letter the editor reached out and grasped the Judge's hand, crying:

"Fine, Judge! Fine!"

But when the editor looked up into the waxy old face he found it cast into a determined mould, which was half stare and half a self-deprecatory smile. The Judge stood in silent embarrassment a moment, then spoke in a cracked, overstrained voice:

"No — no — no! I tell you, Archimedes — don't you see I can't do it?"

The inner storm in his heart was playing in heat lightning twitches across the wrinkled face; but the high, overstrained voice answered its own question, while the self-deprecatory smile held its place through the storm:

"Why, man, can't you see? I can't surrender — not now — not now, Archimedes." He was weaving slightly; and he grasped the desk with his

bony, veinous hands as he went on in the same tense, unnatural voice: "I'll not pull down my flag now, after — after —"

He gathered strength from outside himself and found his natural voice, to say very slowly and cautiously, as one picking his way through flashes of light:

"I have begged for this cause, man! I have had to lie for this cause. I may yet — I may — I — well, I could steal for it if I had to; but, with the help of all the high gods, I'll not sell it out — I'll not sell it out for money!"

His voice broke in a little senile scream. The heat lightning on his face was a sheet of emotion and his trembling hands shook the desk. In a moment the storm subsided, for age does not long sustain its passions. An instant later he cried in triumph, as though to some invisible gallery:

"No — no! 'My head is bloody, but unbowed!'"

He was proud of his quotation, and his pride held back for a moment the reaction of grief in his soul. He may have felt it coming, for he turned quickly, sighed a spent sigh that was half a sob,

and fumbled his way out of the room, along the hall and into the street.

There, through a window, the man at the desk saw the Judge rubbing, with his bony fingers, the moisture from his burned-out eyes; but he was marching proudly through some exalted heaven to recite the story of his great refusal to the griffin, in her chains, and to the adoring mortal who watered his shrine.

"And I have seen," mused Archimedes, as he drummed on the desk with the little pine lever that moved his world, "the half gods go and the gods arrive!"

THE STRANGE BOY

THEY had just returned from their work in the Manual and were considering large matters concerning their coming hike. They were Twelve, Thirteen and Fourteen, and full of the joy that washes into life with the first full tides of youth. At the Manual they had been making things with their hands in wood and iron and stone. Creation seemed good to them. And they talked, making their to-morrow a kind of exalted yesterday, which is the way of youth. An old party of forty-five, sitting near them reading a musty book that had been off the list of best sellers for six long months, closed the book over his finger to mark the place while he listened to the chatter of the boys.

There was talk of a day's walk in the country; of a raft to be made at the river under the scout-master's direction; of fishing tackle to be had at the town's stores; where the best rods might be bought; what minnows were worth. Some consideration was given to the various grades of khaki

for scouting suits. Also, not a little incidental gossip was sprinkled through the talk of the batting averages of the baseball kings, and of records on the high-school tracks of those nearer and more palpable heroes whose prowess was attainable even to Twelve and Thirteen and Fourteen.

They were good scouts of the first and second classes, and much of their chatter was of the camp and the field. The old party, hearing of river-bends where he had sounded the flat-bottomed depths, and of fields that were woodlands in his day, and of rifles he had dammed, let the hand with the book drop to his knee as the talk woke in his heart a faint pulse from some underconsciousness that had not been stirred for years.

The boys were lying on a lawn beneath the stone veranda railing whereon his old feet rested. From time to time the youngsters looked up as automobiles went whizzing by and in monosyllables checked off the makers and perhaps the owners of the machines; but the checking did not stay their talk of the glorious to-morrows, silvered and gilded with yesterdays. Life, through the boys' eyes and in their visions, was a splendid picnic; and, like every picnic, it was away from home.

The garage in the rear of the lot whereon they were lying, the coal bin in the cellar of the house beside them, the great shade trees that overhung the lawn, the formal rows of flowers and clumps of shrubs about them, the wide parking, the asphalted street before them, and the house behind them, had small place in their tall talk. The athletic field, the ward play-ground, the gymnasium, the public highway beyond the town limits, and the river, which to them seemed designed as a part of their rather formal business of playing, furnished their minds, like set pieces in a clean and well-appointed room.

"Canned!" sighed the old party. "Canned boys!" he repeated.

The boys looked up and, seeing the feet disappear from the railing, Thirteen rose quickly and said as he appeared:

"Yes, sir. What was it, Father? Did you speak?"

The old party shook his head, and the boys stretched out again on the blue-grass. As he opened his book and fumbled for his place, over the page top he saw, coming round the house from the rear, a thin, freckled, barefooted youth, with

long trousers rolled up halfway to his knees, showing the flowered calico lining. Suspenders striped the shoulders of the boy's coarse-checked blue-and-white cotton shirt. Twisted into his right suspender was a Y-shaped stick, wound with rubber, whereon a diamond-shaped leather piece dangled from two strings.

"If the marshal sees that he'll arrest you!" said the man; and as the strange boy grinned the old party asked: "Where have you been so long?"

The other boys did not seem to notice the strange boy, who grumbled as he sat down beside them:

"Doing my chores. Old Sooky's calf like to never got her supper out of the bucket. And old Sooky tried to hold up on me. I think they ought to make somebody brush the flies off while I milk. I bet old Sooky hit me in the eye a dozen times with her tail. Say, they's a mangerful of kittens in the south stall; but I bet the old Tom will eat 'em up before mornin' if the girls don't take 'em in."

The other boys looked up when the old party shifted his feet and groaned:

"Oh! These are not real boys—they're canned boys! All the other industries have left the home for the cannery — why not boy-making? Here, boys!" The old party lifted his voice sharply.

"Yes, sir!" cried Fourteen, rising agilely and saluting.

"Which one of you knows what wood makes the best arrows? Which one of you ever seasoned a piece of hickory behind the stove over the wood box all winter for your bow? Do you know what bodark is?"

"Yes, sir," replied Thirteen. "It is a corruption of the French words *bois d'arc*, meaning wood of the arch, and is probably an Indian translation of the French habitant's word describing the tough, springy wood of the Osage Orange, or common hedge plant."

The strange boy grinned and the old party answered:

"Oh, grand! Now then, Bud, you tell them about the bodark."

The boys sat down, and the old party took the words from the strange boy's mouth and went on:

"Bodark is a hard brown wood and makes the best bow you ever saw — better than hickory even. Few boys that I knew ever had a bodark bow, though all of them knew that the Indians prized bodark highly. Bud"—the old party turned to the strange boy—"do you remember that Beasley boy whose mother was scalped by the Indians in the raid of '69, when the Cheyennes came up from the territory and cleaned out all the settlements along the creek bottoms and carried that boy off when he was a baby?"

"Well, he came back when he was ten years old, a thorough-going Injun — silent, stubborn, mean, revengeful; but, lordy-lordy, what a shot with a bow and arrow! And what a lot of things about horses and dogs he knew, and how he could get round in the woods! You boys think you worship Ty Cobb or Johnnie Kling; but we boys bowed down before Jack Beasley as to a graven image."

Twelve, Thirteen and Fourteen were chinning by the stone railing and eagerly looking at the old party, who smiled at the strange boy.

"Bud," cried the man, "do you remember how we gave Jack our marbles?"

"And he put 'em in his slingshot and threw them at the birds," answered the strange boy.

"And we were proud of his scorn of the marbles!" laughed the old party.

"He threw my black agate — my best black agate, that cost me twenty glassies and a dozen potteries and a whole cigar box of commies — he put my black agate in his slingshot, whirled it round his head and killed a pigeon with it on a roof."

"And he taught us the Injun pinch," laughed the man as he closed his book. "Say, Bud, give the boys an Injun pinch! And he sold us by making us eat Injun turnip — and about burned our mouths out."

"I can taste it yet; but I was mighty proud to be sold by Jack Beasley," said the strange boy, and added: "What a mean little devil he must have been!"

"And filthy too! Why, Bud, do you remember the day at the old limekiln swimming hole when Jack cooked a chicken without cleanin' it, and ate it — tops and all?"

The strange boy grinned. "But how he could run! Used worm oil on his legs to make 'em lim-

ber; put a lot of fishworms in a bottle and fried 'em in the sun; and —"

"Snake oil that was," interrupted the old party. "Say, boys" — the man addressed himself to the youths whose faces beamed cherubically over the rail — "suppose you could have Ty Cobb and Teddy Roosevelt, and the greatest scoutmaster in the world, and the greatest football player, all rolled into one right here in the yard — who would wait in the barn while you —"

"What barn?" cut in precise Thirteen.

"Well, the garage, then" — the man corrected himself and hurried on — "while you went into the house and stole fried cakes for him, and —"

"Stole what?" cut in Twelve.

"Why, fried cakes — doughnuts. Don't you boys eat doughnuts?"

"No man in training would, I'm sure," explained Fourteen.

"Oh," humbly returned the old man, drawing a deep breath. "I forgot you boys are highly sanitary — absolutely pure! You probably never ate sheep sorrel, nor —"

"Nor sucked a grapevine in spring — nor ate redbuds?"

"Bud," smiled the old party, looking into the blue eyes of the strange boy with that fond reminiscence which is the keenest joy of maturity, "do you remember how we used to go trailing through the woods, browsing off the young fresh twigs like gods in the elder days?"

"Perhaps we were gods," replied the strange boy.

The old party gazed mutely for a moment across the green carpet of the lawn and saw a strange thing: A thick, deep wood, stretching up over a wide bottom land; a shimmering stream, flashing in merry ripples over brown stones; a water bird flickering round a distant bend, disappearing as into some mystic sanctuary; overhanging elm trees far up-stream, shading green water; a curling path, leading down to the brink, a path worn smooth by a thousand boyish feet. And he heard — above the heron's cry and the jay's fretting, blended indistinctly with the mourning dove's complaint — the far, shrill call of boys' voices, chattering like the herons and the jays — voices that came through the underbrush nearer and nearer, until soon the woods resounded with their calls. In a moment he saw them flash, naked and

beautiful, into the still, green water, and, running up the slanting elm's great branches, drop screaming with joy from the elm top into the pool.

"Yes," he answered softly; "perhaps we were — perhaps we were!"

"Perhaps we were what?" insisted Fourteen.
"What are you talking about, Father?"

"Can you make a whistle from a hickory sapling?" replied the old party, ignoring the question.
"Can you make a horn from the stem of a pumpkin leaf? Did you ever belong to a band that went trailing out, single file and naked, through a cornfield, and down through the horse-weeds of the tall timber, to a swimming hole, playing on horns made from pumpkin vines, with the little boys blowing on peach leaves held between their upright thumbs? No; you never did such a thing!" He shook his head sadly. "Well, Bud and I have done just that!"

"Did you have feet like goats, Father?" suggested Twelve timidly.

"Yes; hard, callous, cut, bruised, sore, brown, ugly and adventuring were our feet," answered the old party. "And those were the pipes of Pan — those pumpkin-vine horns, those hickory whis-

tles, and those peach-leaf clarinets. And once we got a conch shell from the whatnot and sang into it, and made wonderful music. Bud! Bud, do you remember that?"

The strange boy's face beamed with delight, and Thirteen cut in:

"How very interesting!" and then asked: "What is a whatnot, Father?"

The man looked his mild scorn at the question, but only the strange boy saw it, and he chuckled:

"They don't understand! They were never as we were. They are of the higher order."

"I think," mused the man, "when the barn went the half gods went and these gods appeared. The barn was the temple of earlier gods — they who were neither brutes nor gods, but half of each. The barn was our real abiding place. Why, Bud, when the old barn went and the garage came, I saw each timber go as one bids good-bye to an old friend.

"The very rafters were sacred! There our trapeze swung; there the rings dangled on which we turned buzz-wheels; there was our springboard before the haypile in the manger; there we gave our shows; there we played our first

casino and seven-up; and there we learned in whispers the great mysteries of life. The barn was the boy's Eden. He entered it in the sweet innocence of childhood and played ghosts there, and talked with voices there, and held communion with the gods; and when he left it — when the barn no longer held him — its creaking doors banged on him, and he walked past the flaming sword into life, filled with the knowledge of good and evil! What will boys do when there are no more barns? ”

“Come on!” said Fourteen, taking his chin from the stone railing. “Father is tired.”

The three sprawled on the close-cropped sward — on back or belly as it pleased each; and the talk droned from carbureters and a cynical criticism of the talking movies to the proper weight in tennis rackets, then into the local boy problems in wireless, and on into the mysteries of the new pulmotor over at the engine house of the fire department. But on the veranda the old party and the strange boy were holding forth on the splendours and glories of the Golden Age.

“And yet,” returned the strange boy, “what they have — all this large leisure to consider the

universe, all these store things, all this machine-made pleasure and formal joy — was what I hoped for, what I longed for most eagerly. They are as I would have had the angels in my heaven. They are the visions I saw of good boys made perfect."

"And you," repeated the old party gently, "you, Bud — you are the dreams I dream!"

"I wonder," smiled the strange boy through his great brown freckles, "if your next heaven will be so — well, so different in a way from what you thought it would be — as my heaven is here!"

"I wonder too, Bud!" The old party drew a deep breath before going on. "I wonder if our heaven isn't mostly behind us!"

"I know," said the strange boy, "I should not be so wise for my age; but living with you has kind of wised me beyond my years. So I'll venture to guess that most of our heavens are behind us — when we pass forty-five."

"You're a nuisance, boy!" laughed the old party. "Some day I'm going to discharge you — fire you — throw you out — get rid of you! I wouldn't keep you round but for one thing, and —"

"And that is —"

"And that is because if it wasn't for you I'd die! You are the cupbearer who brings me the oil of gladness. You bring the quick clank of steel on dark-green ice; the whizzing landscape that reels past the bob-sled. You carry with you the taste of hackberries in winter woods, and in your whistle is the call of redbirds, glistening like divine fire among the sombre woods of February. You take me trudging to my traps in the winter dawn, and teach me again the intimate secrets of the field and water and timber lot, and the tangle of the unbroken forest. Because you come, I remember the joy of splitting black walnut and hackberry, and how the crooked stick fills up the wood-box.

"Ah, but you're a rascal, Bud! You're a rascal; a wool-dyed villain! How slow you work before Sunday School! How long you lie behind the blackberry bushes in the back garden in the shade when your hoeing takes you past this shelter! What a thief you are — stealing old man Boswell's tobacco from the field; swiping old man Howe's chickens, and rolling off old man Ewing's watermelons from in front of his store! While old man Young, wearing his marshal's star of great pride, chases you through the alleys to your

pirates' cave! Old man Garrison knew you when you raided his apple wagon in the autumn with your apple stealer. All the old men knew you for a scoundrel — old men who were in their forties then! Old men? Old men who only died two decades ago! Old men? Ah, Bud, only one old man in all the world ever knew you and loved you — just one old man!"

The strange boy turned away and pretended to be interested in what the youths were saying on the grass below.

"Bud, I've been pretty good to you — haven't I — since you came back, twenty-five years ago?"

"Was it that long ago? Why, I thought it was only —"

"Twenty-five years, Bud! I didn't miss you so much for half a dozen years; and then when you did come back I rather —"

"Yes; you've spoiled me probably, so far as that goes," the strange boy broke in; "made a pet of me — and a fool, more or less."

"But, Bud, answer me this," said the old party quickly: "What became of you in those years — those beautiful years of youth? Where did you go and why did you go?"

The strange boy stood still and looked at the ground.

"Aw — why, that's all right!" he answered evasively. "I'm here, ain't I? Say, do you remember the time we tied Nate Brown to a tree all night down in Balch's hog lot, and —"

"Stop it, Bud! Answer me: Why did you go?"

"Do you want to know, honest — honest?" asked the strange boy, drumming his fingers on the cool stone.

"Honest to God, Bud!"

"Won't you ever tell — her?"

"Who?" He followed the strange boy's eyes toward the house; and the old party went on with his oath: "Honest to God, Bud! Hope to die! Hope to be any name you can call me — cross my heart, and hope to drop dead!"

"Well — Aw, I'm not goin' to do it!"

"Ah, yes! Come on! Why did you leave me so suddenly and only come back in my dreams? Come on, Bud! Tell a feller something, Bud!"

The boy looked at the open door of the house. He stepped close to the old party.

"Aw — well, it's nothin' much — only she —

her in there — that used to live across the alley — Well, you know just as well as I — Aw, I ain't a-goin' to tell! ”

The old party looked gently into the strange boy's red, shame-coloured face. Tears streaked through the freckles, but he tried to smile.

“ Go on, Bud; I'll understand.”

“ Well, you remember that night she was standing by the fence, that June evening when we came home from Pilliken's party? Well, doggone it, she killed me — killed me as dead as a nit, I tell you! She did — she who is in the house — she who has been in the house all these years — she killed me, I tell you! ” The strange boy wagged a vengeful head toward the door.

“ How? Why, how, Bud? ” exclaimed the old party under his breath, also, furtively keeping his eyes on the door.

“ With that — that — Oh, you know — with that first awful kiss! ”

“ Oh — I — see! ” replied the man. “ And so she — ”

“ Yes,” interrupted the strange boy; “ she turned me into a dream and you into a man — and we parted.”

As the book fell to the floor the old party cried:

"Son! Son, how about that music? Isn't it time for your practicing?"

"Just a minute, daddy!" called back Fourteen.

"I'm inventing a new kind of airship, with an armour-plate bottom, for war!" And the young men saw visions.

The old party smiled sadly and sighed as he saw the strange boy dragging himself slowly round the corner to finish his evening chores, limping heavily as he went, and whispered:

"And the old men dream dreams!"

THE END

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